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MATERNAL LOVE.

A NOVEL,

BY

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"FIRST LOVE," "THE LIGHT OF MENTAL SCIENCE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MATERNAL LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

ADRIAN, who had fallen so suddenly in love overnight, felt panic struck on awaking in the morning, and remembering the presumptuous wishes, almost amounting to hopes, under the influence of which he had fallen asleep. Accordingly, he offered his breakfast-table salutation to his beautiful cousin with a due sense of being but the acquaintance of a few hours.

During the day, however, which was de-

voted to an excursion, by a large pleasure seeking 'party, from the Wolderlands; the young cousins, during the wandering of couples, which generally occur on such occasions, got on again amazingly; so that they returned to the house, old acquaintances, at least.

Some circumstances had forced Catherine forward in mind, while others had held her back in experience.

Once, therefore, that she ceased to feel herself an entire stranger, she had no habitual mannerism in which to take refuge; but became as trusting, and as candid as a child. Thus, though in the ways of the world, she was many years younger than her actual age; yet, in appreciation of the great and the sublime, she was as many years older.

While, therefore, she might possibly have blushed in replying to an ordinary salutation, she could converse freely on subjects which called forth her enthusiasm, and made her forget that she herself formed any

part of that splendid creation, which she admired, till instinctive worship was awakened, and the whole soul elevated by veneration of the infinite in goodness, in wisdom, and in the power of doing good.

If Adrian had been captivated from the first by her beauty ; if his tenderness and generosity had been awakened by the trusting simplicity of her manner ; there was a spell more irresistible for a mind like his, in those sympathies of soul, which thus identified her idea continually with that of the angel spirit, which had seemed to linger near invisible ; the sole companion of these, his higher aspirations, since that solemn hour, on which it had forsaken its earthly tenement so gently, that the fair form, as it lay enshrined in its flowery bower ; with sunbeams for its funeral tapers ; and the song of birds, and hum of bees for its requiem, left fond memory to dwell on the sweet picture of calm and innocent sleep, rather than the gloomy one of death.

CHAPTER II.

LORD WOLDERLAND had thought fit to celebrate his grand-daughter's arrival by a *fête* —brilliant saloons adorned with statues and vases, and pillared like Grecian temples; inferior apartments, and long galleries connecting them with the saloons, converted into shrubbery labyrinths, by foliage decorations, and wreathings of coloured lamps, had rendered the locality in which our scene is laid, impossible to be recognised by the most familiar guest.

Proceeding with a trembling step along one of the green glades thus produced; appeared a fair young form on which had been lavished, the splendours of the East.

The small embroidered gauze handker-

chief, so slight of texture as to be scarcely perceptible, was fastened among the flowing tresses, with countless gems, in the forms of butterflies. Strings of costly pearls, strove in vain, to rival the whiteness of the delicate throat. The open falling sleeve, displayed the rounded arm, almost covered with dazzling bracelets ; a chemisette of silver gauze, closed by a tie of diamonds, rose and fell, and a bouquet of sparkling jewels trembled, as the timid heart of the wearer beat with mingled hope and apprehension ; a blue satin bodice, embossed with silver, and sprinkled with sparks of diamonds, sat tight to the moddled form, and precious stones studded the girdle, which encircled the slender waist. While draperies of many brilliant hues hung over the graceful limbs in graduated lengths till they reached the slender ankle; gathered in around which, by a string of pearl, clasped by a diamond fastening, peeped the Turkish trousers of silver gauze; and from beneath

these again the tiny feet, decked in gemmed and embroidered slippers, and gleaming like the glow-worm as they trod the deep green carpet; which in tint and softness, rivalled nature's own verdant sod. Approaching along the same leaf embowered path, but from an opposite direction, appeared a tall, majestic form, habited in a costume of equal brilliancy; and which from its turban, tunic, and general character, denoted the individual to be a Turk of exalted rank—probably the Grand Sultan himself.

The dress was regal in its appointments, and showed to great advantage the grace and symmetry of the wearer: while there played on his fine features a slight smile, which seemed to ask pardon of himself for something; perhaps, for the folly of being thus gorgeously attired.

The slight smile instantaneously brightened into one of delight and ardent admiration on beholding the lovely Sultana, we have just described. He quickened his

step: he was at her side in a moment. He proffered his arm: it was accepted with alacrity; yet the little hand which now rests upon it visibly trembles. He spoke, and his words called into the fair cheek that brilliant glow, which alone was wanting to its perfect loveliness; and of which fear —of what? Of being seen in such a fine dress, had robbed it. But Catherine—for the Sultana is no other—while listening to the encouraging whispers of Adrian—though dressed as the Sultan, could not long continue to experience any uncomfortable sensation; notwithstanding that her own dress was the very last she would have chosen, and although she was about to appear at—such a terrible affair as—a fancy ball, the second time in her life, that she had ever appeared anywhere among strangers. But Lord Wolderland, who was as great a tyrant as any Sultan, had ordered the dress of his grand-daughter without consulting her; merely because he had a predilection for excessive magnificence in

all who had the honour of being related to him, and judged this a fitting occasion to display, on the person of his probable heiress, at one blaze, the whole of the family jewels; which in splendour were little less than regal.

His lordship had also, in his letter of invitation to Adrian, requested him, with a pomp and solemnity, which on such a subject were ludicrous, to appear as the grand Sultan, and cause to be introduced into the costume the whole of his mother's and aunt's jewels, which he understood had centred in him as sole heir of both.

Adrian never contested about trifles, therefore he had, as we have seen complied.

For many weeks the whole county had been invited to a grand election ball, at which the company were expected to appear in fancy dresses; and decorations from town had been for some time employed in rendering the Wolderlands, within and without, a scene of enchantment.

You could scarcely ascertain whether

you were inside the building or not, for temporary temples were erected in the grounds, and illuminated alleys led you imperceptibly into those artificial glades, formed by decorating galleries and arching over door ways, like the entrances to bowers, with foliage and coloured lamps.

Like all who are willing to go astray, Adrian found an excuse for wandering from the direct path in giving his companion time to recover herself. Accordingly they more than once perceived that they were treading on real grass, beneath the shade of real trees; and again on the deep carpets of artificial glades, before they found their way to the great room.

At length they did so. It was decorated as a temple of the sun. The brilliancy of the lighting was overpowering, and the crowd immense. Catherine drew back involuntarily at its threshold, and clung to the arm of her companion. The thrill of pleasure he experienced as she did so, derived intensity from the excitement of the

scene, and the remembrance that his costume gave him a sort of right to monopolize the society of his fair cousin for the greater part of the evening. And the privilege was one of which he fully availed himself; while on the plea of performing his part with spirit, as one of the dramatic persons of the entertainment, he expressed with a graceful playfulness, much more of the real admiration he felt, than in his own character of Adrian Wentworth, he might have thought quite decorous.

Catherine, to whom even the commonplaces of every-day politeness from a man of the world, would have had the chance at least of novelty, experienced an extraordinary degree of delighted emotion, while lending a willing ear to the gay gallantries of her handsome and courtly mannered companion. She felt that his admiring gaze was constantly turned towards the arm that hung on his and her eyes therefore as constantly sought the ground; or if for a moment raised, as quickly fell again—she

knew not exactly why—for she seemed to be entranced in a new species of happiness that would have been perfect, but for the vague sense, that the evening must come to a close some time or other.

The figure which, as the cousins entered the great room, was drawing general attention, was that of a very tall Bohemian woman, whose sun-burnt features were handsome, and whose dark eyes flashed fire, through wild redundant locks, that almost veiled the countenance. The same figure had passed them in one of the shrubbery walks, as they were endeavouring to find their way, and had cast upon them an observing glance.

The Bohemian was singing with much wild pathos, but in tones which more resembled a man's feigned voice, than the natural notes of a woman. The extraordinary thing was, that although no one was masked, and the company was supposed to consist of persons generally well-known to each other, no one could devise who the

Bohemian was; while yet, between her snatches of song, she told fortunes, and showed an intimate knowledge of the characters, and circumstances of all she addressed. Her remarks were bitter and sarcastic; and, to all but the parties animadverted upon, extremely amusing; for she appeared to be perfectly reckless who she offended, or whose feelings she hurt. She was particularly severe on Lady Montville: seized her hand, held it under examination by force; and proclaimed aloud, that all her unworthy schemes would end in disappointment; that her path, to the very grave, was covered with crosses; that she would cause the misery of both her children. That she was hated by both, and respected by neither. That open rebellion would mark the conduct of both, and that dark clouds overshadowed their concluding fate.

She next approached the cousins; took a hand of each, and insisted on examining them together.

"You will love devotedly," she said, with a tone of compassion, "but others will make you the tools of their ambition; and you will be wretched."

She then passed on to Lady Emily Rosley, took her hand, held it in a trembling yet crushing grasp; looked fixedly in her eyes for a time—then pronounced solemnly, "By rebellion alone, can you escape from perjury!" After which stooping over the hand more closely, she muttered some sentences in an under tone. Lady Emily fainted. The Bohemian supported the sinking form, bent over the pale features; and as she did so, her wild hair fell over her eyes.

Thus incommoded, she impatiently tore from her brow, and flung from her, the redundant wig, which covering the greater part of the face, and changing the character of the little that remained visible, had been her principal disguise: and now, it became easy to recognize, despite of paint and dress, the countenance of Mr. Beaumont, the young

man who had passed Lady Emily the evening before, with so much affected indifference; and who, though but a middle sized man, looked very tall in woman's attire.

The crowd which always collects around a person who faints, made their comments.

It was all Lady Montville's fault, they agreed. What could she expect? She had wilfully made the poor young man the victim of canvassing speculations. If her daughter, whom she had made her tool, had got entangled, she had no one to blame but herself. Had she not permitted them to waltz together continually? Invited the young man eternally to her house; and given him every sort of encouragement, till the election was over; and then, when he had won the girl, and thought he had nothing to do, but ask the mother's consent, absolutely laughed at him, for what she called his ridiculous presumption; and dismissed him in the most insulting, and unfeeling manner!

"What I blame him for," said another,

"is his cruelty to his fellow victim; with whom he seems, unreasonably enough, to be almost as angry, as with her mother. He treats her with studied neglect, whenever they meet; and parades his attentions to other ladies in her presence, with the evident intention of mortifying her.

Lady Emily revived; new characters appeared; and her story was forgotten.

Lady Harriet Nightingale, in the unlucky costume of a novice, passed a group of gentlemen, who most ungallantly remarked, that the sooner she took the veil the better.

Beaumont reappeared in the character of an electioneering candidate; and with an over-acted affectation of high spirits, went about the room, making broad caricatures of electioneering speeches in which he spared neither individuals nor the system; but denounced each, and all, with that bitterness of sarcasm, which generally has private pique for its foundation.

The next day it was reported, that Lady Emily had taken a quantity of laudanum,

in mistake, some accounts said, for tincture of castor; and that she must have been poisoned, had not the mistake been discovered, and antidotes administered. Other accounts however affirmed, that the laudannum had been taken purposely. And others, again, that it was all a *ruse* to alarm and mortify her mother, or her lover, or both.

CHAPTER III.

BEAUMONT was the only child of a widowed mother, who loved him excessively; though, poor woman! blindly.

As a little fellow, from two to seven years old, he had always done everything she had told him not to do, looking up in her face all the time with an arch smile; and then running and clambering on her knee to have a kiss, which she never had the heart to refuse him.

Every improper indulgence, too, which she would make a faint effort to withhold, was sure to be granted in the end; for the child soon found out, that he had only to glide his arms round mama's neck, and in

a coaxing voice repeat: "But do!" to obtain all he desired. But he saw also—or rather felt—that it was to his mother's fondness that he owed everything; and accordingly he adored her in return, and though, to strangers, he was insufferably naughty and troublesome, he would have been obedient to her, had he seen her look less happy, when he was disobedient; but, as she only looked amused, and called him her darling, saucy boy; his better feelings took no alarm. So he went on heedlessly loving her, and pleasing himself; except, indeed, that as he grew up, and his mind opened to consequences, he would sometimes stop short, of his own accord, in his career of thoughtlessness, and say:

"No! my poor mother cannot refuse me anything—but this would be asking too much!"

He was of course the sole object of his partial mother's admiration. As might be expected, he followed her example in this; and grew up with the most over-weening

opinion of himself, which disposed him to be insolent, and careless of the forms of respect to strangers—unless his kindness, or compassion were awakened. This necessarily rendered him very unpopular. But there was always the warm spot in his heart around the image of his mother. Nay, the worse he thought himself treated abroad, the more that heart turned towards the partial parent, in whose presence the wounds of his self-love, always found a healing balm.

Thus he was bad enough; but he was not one thousandth part so bad, as a character spoiled by over severity would have been. His mother's love, however unwisely shown, had awakened his sympathies by times; and rendered him capable of feeling out of self.

His vanity had made him fall an easy prey to Lady Montville's electioneering snare. He would come home, full of his hopes; pour out his heart to his mother, and relate every little circumstance, coloured

by his own sanguine temper. On all this, again, his partial parent would put the most flattering construction. No wonder then that his aspirations grew into certainties; and that he felt his disappointment severely when—the election over—Lady Montville treated his proposal as presumption, or folly, or both; and dismissed him unceremoniously.

Lady Emily, on the other hand, had always had too humble an opinion of herself; that is, on the only subject which girls in general think important—beauty—for Lady Montville had a sort of crude notion about not allowing young people to grow up vain. Accordingly, she had always called her a poor little ugly thing, and told her to practise her music, and try to be accomplished, as she had no chance of being handsome.

As a child, also, Lady Emily had been too thin and pale, to be remarked as pretty; but, about the age of seventeen, the first glow of her beauty was exqui-

site, like that of a delicate hot-house plant.

Beaumont chanced to be her first conquest; and this while the idea of possessing personal charms was so new to her, that it needed not the ardour and fire of his nature, to render his enthusiastic admiration intoxicating. It was from his lips she first heard she was beautiful: and from that moment, she would sit for hours before her looking glass, seeking confirmation of the delightful truth.

The shock, therefore, to both was great, when, after the election, Beaumont was not only refused by Lady Montville, but laughed at.

He pressed Lady Emily to run off with him. But from this step, natural timidity, and habitual dread of her mother combined, for the present, to deter her. This was the cause of his resentment against his fellow sufferer: for, accustomed to have everything yielded to him, by the fondness of his poor mother, without

any reference to the fitness of the indulgence, he had no idea that affection could be sincere, which stopped at any sacrifice where his gratification was at stake.

CHAPTER IV.

THE election came on.

The speech of Adrian on the hustings caused a great sensation, and was reported, with flattering remarks, in all the London papers.

He proved the successful candidate. He hastened to town to take his seat; for the session was drawing to a close.

Short as was the time, however, it afforded him opportunities of distinguishing himself: for some great questions were under discussion, respecting which he held such decided opinions, that he could not conscientiously keep silence.

He spoke frequently and brilliantly, and a future career of glory was prophesied.

The session closed; and he returned to the Wolderlands, with a great influx of other guests.

County races followed: no one rode so well as Adrian. County race balls: no one danced with so much grace and ease.

Late returnings home were frequent; so were dinner engagements, luncheon parties, pic-nics, morning drives, &c., &c.

Absence had not lessened his admiration of his fair cousin.

Rather, indeed, were his feelings, on again beholding her, heightened by an extraordinary sense of something like surprise; for beautiful as the vision had been, which during absence had dwelt in his memory; the reality in its living, breathing loveliness, was so surpassing; that he seemed to gaze on some being of a higher

sphere, to which even fancy had not been able to soar. His devotion was immediately renewed.

During every drive he rode at the window of the carriage that contained Catherine; at every dinner party he sat beside her, at every ball he was her partner, and he generally contrived to secure a place in the carriage that brought her home. From time to time, indeed, he tried to call himself to account—He asked himself whether he could be quite sure that all was right, while he was thus carried along on the full tide of inclination; but he could see no possible reason why he should endeavour to check his admiration of his lovely cousin. She was everything that both his heart and his judgment could desire—she was, he felt confident, the choice his dear mother would have made for him, had she been living; she was, he knew, the choice she had made for him by anticipation, when both were children—and, above all things, he felt the thrilling conviction, that she received all

his attentions with a pleasure, she was too artless to conceal. Beside all this, time had confirmed his opinion, that Lord Wolderland was the last person in the world to remember that everything was new to his grand-daughter: nor did he think more highly of Lady Montville, on acquaintance; so that he found no great difficulty in persuading himself, that the pleasing duty of being the adviser of his cousin's inexperience still devolved on him. The advice was always taken in good part, and such was the mutual understanding which thus sprang up between the cousins, that Catherine soon learnt to know, even in society, by a stolen glance at the expression of Adrian's countenance, what he secretly thought she ought to do. This tacit influence gradually extended itself to everything; whether accidental emergency, daily occupation, or mere amusement. When she had finished the perusal of a book, it was Adrian who selected another for her from the library; and even ventured, sometimes, to mark

passages to which he was anxious to draw her attention. If she wished for new music, he it was who helped her to choose it. If she took a sketch he it was who assisted her in finding the most favourable point of view, till, in time, each ruined tower and rocky point, and river bend; nay, every tree and branch, and leaf in Catherine's sketch-book had its own consecrated remembrance. While each bar of music which she played, or sang, told its own adventitious tale, of sadness, or of tenderness; derived from association, and independent of the composer's will.

This employment of sketching gave rise to conversations on the beauties of nature, which breathed the very soul of poetry; and the more so, because they occurred so naturally during delightful morning, or evening rambles, to catch a remarkable effect, or glowing tint expected to be produced by a rising or a setting sun; for when any such were worth preserving—Catherine's sketches were washed in colours

under the direction of Adrian's cultivated taste. And he had an eye so quick for discerning the beautiful, that the most evanescent of these effects never escaped him. Even when such appeared during a solitary walk, with no companion near to whom to make a remark; he would, nevertheless, pause, and gaze upon it, while it lasted, with a countenance that reflected the varying face of nature; now bright—now pensive—now lustrous with the blending of enjoyment and emotion.

By this time Adrian had often conversed freely with Catherine, of his mother; a subject he held so sacred, that it was never lightly approached, or indeed approached at all, except with those, between whom and himself sympathy already existed.

In speaking of this dear parent, of her death, of the vow pronounced at her dying couch; the objects to which he had resolved to devote his life, in pursuance of that vow, were also discussed, and with irresistible eloquence; for it flowed warm from a heart

whose benevolence had been so early awakened, and so nobly directed, that brotherhood with all mankind, seemed to its expanded sympathies, as simple and natural a sentiment, as affection for any, the nearest relations of domestic life.

Catherine's mind, prepared as it had also been by the early love and admiration of goodness, caught the kindred enthusiasm, which, while she listened, sparkled in her eyes, and beamed on her ingenuous countenance, with an expression quite angelic; a fulness of trust, that all that ought to be would be, that might have rendered any face lovely; what then must have been the charm of Catherine's? already beautiful, viewed thus by one who loved her.

"Oh, shall I live to see all this?" she would sometimes ask, "or shall I be permitted after I die to look back on this world, and see this splendid harvest ripening, and every one growing good and happy?"

Thus to enjoy with her he loved, an interchange of those ennobling sentiments,

which were the precious legacy of his sainted mother, and in which he found so few who could sympathize, was indeed a foretaste of heaven.

In the midst of so much that was delightful, there was one alloy; an occasional inequality in Catherine's spirits, which was a source of great anxiety to Adrian.

Sometimes, without his being able to trace what connection the subject of conversation could have with her thoughts, she would suddenly become silent and abstracted, a tear would tremble in her long eye-lashes, and a sigh would escape her. When kindly questioned by him, as to the cause of her sadness, she would reply in a sort of desponding tone:

"Oh, only letters from home."

Yet she did not say that any one was ill; and the manner, he could not tell why, suggested the idea of mystery! It did not seem to be simply regret at being absent from her father; for there was a restless, nervous impatience, to receive and open

her letters, which, to a nice observer, did not always seem to be the child of hope.

Yet what could she have to fear? Fond affection, certainly, is tremulously apprehensive it must be some such feeling! What other, in fact, could it be!

Yet though he told himself this frequently, it was evident, from the very circumstance of his being obliged to re-assure himself so often, that he did not consider the explanation quite satisfactory; but that, on the contrary, he returned again and again, to the vague suspicion that there was some painful mystery connected with Catherine's home. The question, what could that mystery be? as constantly returned, and was always accompanied by a sense of alarm, a strange foreboding that the answer, whenever it should arrive, would dash to the ground the overflowing cup of felicity, which he now held—though in a trembling hand—to his very lips.

CHAPTER V.

In this close attendance on his fair cousin, however, Adrian did not find himself without rivals. Lord Rosley, despite his reported engagement, was marked and even troublesome in his attentions; which drew upon the innocent head of poor Catherine the undeserved hatred of Lady Harriet, who was unsparing in her animadversions on girls that had such an insatiable thirst for admiration, that they flirted with every one; even with married men, or men the same thing as married. And after all, she could tell such girls, it was not admiration which they obtained. Let a girl be ever so plain, if she had a mind to flirt

with every one, every one would flirt with her—but these were not the girls that men married. On the contrary, after amusing themselves with such girls, they laughed at them, and married the dignified, retiring woman, whom they respected too much to make her conspicuous, by paying her attention in public.

There was no mistaking her ladyship's meaning, and Catherine blushed as painfully as if she had been guilty. While Lord Rosley, forgetting in the extravagant passion of the hour, his want of ready money down, seemed determined to win the young beauty under the very eyes of Lady Harriet if he could; and if he failed, to turn round and take her ladyship, without ceremony or apology; knowing that this "dignified and retiring woman" was, and always would be, ready to take him at a moment's notice. To his mother's remonstrances, he would reply:

"I tell you, ma'am, I have no objection to the money, but as for the woman, she is

intolerable. With your cleverness, now, could you not manage to separate them? If I should ever marry Lady Harriet, I shall take care to do so."

"You are too bad, Rosley," said his mother.

"Is there not," he continued, "some poet, philosopher, or divine who talks with commendation of drawing the sweets from everything? I am becoming a moralizer, you perceive."

There fluttered also round Catherine, a host of young men who had not really a pretension, who ought not to have had a hope; yet they had, and always in an inverse ratio to their merits; for there is not a scrap of humanity on earth, wearing a tailor's handy work, that does not think itself entitled to twinkle its eyes, and permit its lips to assume a conscious sort of crooked smile, at the mention of an heiress; however beautiful in person—however exalted in rank—however utterly out of their sphere and reach she may be!

There was one nobleman, however, who would have been, in every way, a suitable match for the probable heiress, and who sought her hand in due form by application to her grandfather. But Lord Wolderland for reasons best known to himself, declined the honour of the proposed alliance, without consulting either Catherine or her father.

During all this, whether it was that Adrian exceeded all competitors in vigilance, or that Catherine sometimes did not hear quite as well when others whispered a request, or see quite as immediately when others proffered an arm ; certain it is, that in all such matters, he almost always carried off the prize.

There were occasions, when he himself thought he perceived, with a distinctness amounting to certainty, that he had had the something more than fair play alluded to ; and these glimpses of internal sunshine banished for the moment, every misgiving occasioned by Catherine's anxiety

about letters. From delicacy, he had as yet delayed any absolute declaration of his love ; but he believed that his undisguised preference must be seen, must be understood; and that the gentle, confiding kindness of manner, with which she continued to receive his attentions, amounted—he thought he might without idle vanity consider—to the most flattering, the most unequivocal acceptance of his devotion. Thus then it was imposible that the mystery, if mystery there were, could affect the success of his suit. Catherine's occasional sadness, could not proceed from concealed attachment to another, while she thus showed an evident preference for him ; and from what other cause that depression of spirits arose, it would be at once his duty and his happiness to remove it, if removeable ; or console her under it, if last it must.

CHAPTER VI.

At the upper end of a splendidly furnished library, stood a great chair of a vastly throne-like appearance, covered with crimson velvet, adorned with gilding, and provided with a semi-circular footstool of such unusual dimensions, that it added considerably to the general effect. In the chair reclined an elderly gentleman, robed in a dressing-gown of gorgeous velvet, lined with sable. He held a roll of paper in his hand, in the manner of a sceptre; while the coronet which formed the centre ornament of his high-backed chair, rising in view just above his head, gave him, in the opposite mirror, very much the air of being crowned.

His countenance too, was pompous—the nose, not satisfied with being aquiline, had got its rise placed quite too high up on the bridge, conveying the idea, it might be difficult to define how, that the self-importance of its owner was equally misplaced.

The personage described, after viewing his regal appearance for a time, with evident self-complacency, looked towards the door once or twice: then knit his brows; then, with a foot suitably attired in a richly embroidered slipper, beat the devil's tattoo, on the deep velvet of his footstool; from which it might be inferred, that the said door, had it been obedient and submissive, as it ought to have been, should ere this have opened, and admitted some one, whom the said personage was expecting. Accordingly, after one or two more reproving glances, the lock was moved, the hinges yielded, the door opened, and a very handsome young man entered. His eyes seemed to enquire why he had been sum-

moned, while his lips wore the slight smile of polite complacency, as he uttered the morning salutation. In his whole countenance and demeanour, there was dignity, self-possession, and self-respect; but there was neither frivolous nor pompous pretension; although there was a slight family likeness to his companion.

The grand difference, however, which distinguished the general expression of the elder gentleman's face from that of the younger, was analagous to that which, though difficult to describe, is felt to subsist between the mock heroic in verse, and really fine poetry.

"I have judged it expedient," commenced the occupant of the great chair, bowing magnificently, and pointing to a seat, "to give you a special audience at the present juncture, to obviate the possibility of your pleading, at any future time, ignorance of my views, in excuse for any rash conduct, into which, as a young man, you might else have been betrayed."

Lord Wolderland, whom the reader has probably recognized, was in the habit of thinking that all persons related to him, in however distant a degree, were bound to pay for that invaluable privilege, by implicit obedience to his will, as the head of the family, and the guardian of its honours—how much more one, on whom those honours were not unlikely to devolve.

"I hope, my Lord," replied Adrian, at a loss what to expect, "that I shall not, on any occasion, act what I should esteem rashly, that is, without some sufficiently considered reasons.'

"That may be, sir," interrupted his Lordship with impatience. "There may be reasons which may seem to *you* sufficient; but they may not be *my* reasons! I must therefore beg to be heard; for this is an affair, permit me to say, which concerns me quite as much as it does yourself.

"Young people, you will allow, some-

times think fit to fall in love, or fancy they do so, which is equally mischievous, without consulting those, who having more experience, and a more extensive knowledge of the political horizon, must know better than they can do, what connexion would be the most suitable for them, as members of a certain family; pillars, I may say, of a certain edifice. Now this is the danger that I would preserve you from, by informing you in time, that as the present, or actual head of the family, which you may one day have the honour of representing, I have—I consider—some claim to advise you on that point; and that you are not, therefore, quite at liberty to make any rash choice you please, founded merely on caprice; as you appear to me rather disposed to do."

Adrian was seriously alarmed: for though aware that he was his own master, and though possessed of sufficient moral courage to assert his freedom, he did not know how Catherine might be disposed to act,

nor what Mr. Wentworth might think of the matter, in the case of Lord Wolderland's setting his face against the match, as he seemed determined to do. He resolved, however, to hear all that his Lordship chose to say, before he spoke. This seemed the most likely way of being furnished with arguments in reply; it was also a means of gaining time, prior to the declaration of open hostilities, which his very first sentence must contain. For he had, of course, no intention of allowing his determination to seek the hand of Catherine, to be shaken by any thing Lord Wolderland could say.

"I need not inform you," continued his Lordship, "that I am, as I have already said, the head of the family; that my son has disappointed all my well-grounded hopes and well-laid plans for the aggrandizement of our house; and lastly, that the person he has thought fit to marry, has not rendered him the only service that could have been expected from a woman of

her grade in life, namely: to have given birth to a son; for, in that case, the son of my son, whoever had been his mother, would have been my grandson; and thus, the titles and estates, would have been continued in the direct line, and without dismemberment. As things stand at present, you, who are but a collateral branch, must inherit, after the death of my son, my titles, together with the entailed portion of my estates; while, my sole remaining grand-daughter, Miss Wentworth, must inherit the unentailed portion of those estates; consisting of one third part at least, as well as the sum of £50,000 charged on the entailed portion. I have therefore decided, on the most mature deliberation, that a marriage between my sole grand-daughter and—" Here, the letter-bag being brought in, his Lordship substituted: " I beg your pardon," for the name of his grand-daughter's future husband; opened the bag, handed the newspapers to Adrian, and proceeded to the examination of his letters; a

ceremony to which, his desire to be a considered a great statesman, caused him to attach, in appearance at least, much imtance.

"And who?" thought the lover, in breathless agitation. "Would that the post had been one second later!—But it must be—or why this preamble about the dismembered estates—Yes! it must be—No other marriage would unite the estates."

His Lordship's letters being disposed of, he recommenced:

"I was observing that a marriage between my sole grand-daughter and yourself, is the only means, both of avoiding the dismemberment of the estates, and of bringing back the title to the direct line; that is as nearly as possible, for although you are only, as I have said, a collateral branch; your son, being (by the arrangements I have named) the son also of my grand-daughter, the representative of the family honours, in the next generation, will be as directly *my* great grand-son, as the

son of my son's son would have been. You perceive?" added his Lordship, pausing, and looking not merely pompous—for that he always did—but absolutely scientific, in virtue of these wonderful discoveries.

"Certainly—certainly—" stammered Adrian, without having the slightest idea what he was saying. His beautiful cousin, whom even to have fallen in love with, so soon, he had been secretly fearing was presumption on his part; thus converted in a moment, into, not only a wife, but a mother —his wife—the mother of his son, by the railway rapidity of his Lordship's business like arrangements. It was, really, a little too much for the nerves of any young man. In the midst, however, of much confusion of ideas, the predominant one, was a thrilling, exquisite joy; the only distinct drawback to which, consisted in a vague dread lest the untimely interference, and unfeeling explanations of his Lordship, might mar all. Were he permitted to plead his own cause, he hoped that—Yes! he did venture

to hope—With a blushing cheek, and a beating heart, therefore, he attempted to speak, commencing with the unlucky word "But—" This was quite enough to render his attempt abortive.

"I must request, sir," exclaimed his Lordship, "that you do not interrupt me with buts! as if I were proposing a thing that I had not considered in all its bearings. I know perfectly what you would say—The only objection which can be urged, is, that extension of connection, is no doubt sacrificed; and certain political influences, which no man knows better how to value than myself, and which might else have been secured, thus forfeited: I have thought over all this; and made up my mind, that, in the unfortunate predicament, in which the disobedience of my son has placed the family, it is the only arrangement which can be made."

"Permit me, my lord," recommenced Adrian, "to suggest—"

"It is impossible for you to suggest any

consideration, which I have not fully weighed," again interrupted his lordship.

"Pardon me," persisted Adrian, "but —but—I may not have had the good fortune to—to—and the presumption of thus—"

His lordship had more respect for Adrian than for most people, or he would not have listened so long.

"Mere trifling sir," he exclaimed; "unworthy of a young man of good sense, such as I take you to be. It is highly improbable that my grand-daughter, should have the temerity to place a will of her own in opposition to my arrangements, respecting the consolidation of my property, and due transmission of my honours: I beg therefore, you may consider the affair concluded!"

"I would not for worlds," exclaimed Adrian, growing desperate, "owe the hand of Miss Wentworth, to any such considerations! Let me entreat your lordship, not to make any attempt to influence

her choice! Allow me—to endeavour—to—"

"I mean," said his lordship, with mock-heroic austerity, "to give my grand-daughter, an audience to-morrow morning; for the purpose of informing her, of my arrangements: she will scarcely dare to object, and you must perceive the necessity of the family alliance, notwithstanding your objections."

"Objections!" exclaimed Adrian in amazement. "Is it possible my lord, you could for a moment suppose—"

"The Rosley connection would have its political advantages, I confess," continued Lord Wolderland, "and it is perfectly natural that you should have political ambition: as you have, unquestionably, great talents in that line. But, the considerations I have explained, are, as you must perceive, still more important. The attentions which I have seen you pay to Lady Emily Rosley, have compelled me,

thus prematurely to announce my arrangements: a line of conduct unlike my usual statesmanship!"

Adrian tried to clear himself of this new impeachment in language intended to express the depth and fervour of his feelings towards his cousin. But his lordship, who never gave up a preconceived idea, persisted in believing that he was only denying the political nature of his views, and pleading attachment to Lady Emily. Lord Wolderland in fact was a man with whom it was impossible to come to an understanding, or an explanation, on any subject. If you but looked enquiringly, his tyrannical spirit took the alarm—after which, each attempt to speak, was cut short by an interruption, and believed to be, without knowing what you were going to say, persisting in opposition. In the midst of Adrian's declaration that he would certainly seek the hand of his fair cousin—and Lord Wolderland's evident acceptance of such declaration, as a becoming concession to

the wisdom of his views; his lordship's man of business, Mr. Snooks, came bowing into the room, and the agitated lover having no desire to make him the confidant of his emotions, glided through a glass-door into the park.

As to the accusation respecting Lady Emily; it was founded on the simple circumstance, that Adrian, who was the most considerate of beings; one to whom it was all but impossible, to wound, even inadvertently the feelings of any creature, or to refrain from offering any solace in his power, to any one he saw suffer, felt great compassion for poor Lady Emily; and, consequently, whenever he chanced not to be in attendance on Catherine, offered her many little marks of good natured attention; in a manner however, which he did not apprehend, could be misunderstood.

CHAPTER VII.

ADRIAN on quitting the library hastened towards a wooded avenue, where slackening his pace he tried to compose the strange tumult of his thoughts. There was joy to intoxication—yet there was something that jarred.

The vision of hoped for bliss, which had been floating through his own fancy veiled in all the poetry of distance, and of true love's doubts, had been suddenly converted into the prose of almost certainty, and presented to his grasp! Was it this which shocked his nice sensibilities? No assuredly he was not foolish enough to quarrel with

perfect happiness, because it was likely to be robbed of a portion of its romance. But he had hoped to have drawn the precious avowal of preference, of sympathy, of willingness to be the cherished partner of his life, from Catherine's own lips, unbiased by any influence, by any other consideration but their mutual love; and now she was to be ordered to marry him, before, perhaps, after all, (for his hopes might have been presumptuous) she knew whether she could prefer him or not. Her feelings towards him might be those of a sister; she might be pleased to receive attention and advice from him, as from a brother; but she might be quite unprepared to look upon him in the light of a husband; and thus he might never know with certainty, possibly she might never know herself whether or not he might have been the object of her choice had she been permitted to choose.

But this was taking her acceptance for granted—would she accept? Would she obey this imperious command? Might she

not do so, and hide beneath a seeming act of obedience, those feelings he had ventured to hope she entertained towards him? And how ought he to behave, in circumstances so strange, so embarrassing? What he might intend for delicacy, might be mistaken for coldness, and even resented as such. While, on the other hand, were his ardour to give him the air of presuming upon the favourable position in which her grandfather's arrangements seemed to place him, the apparent indelicacy of such conduct, would justify her in utterly rejecting his addresses, and taking a decided dislike to him.

After many similar debates and consultations with himself, he at length determined on what seemed to be the only honourable, candid, and reasonable course. He would go in search of Catherine—he would apologize for thus abruptly declaring his love, by pleading the necessity he was under, of preparing her for the interview of the next morning with her grandfather.

He would assure her that, while the happiness of his whole life hung on her free decision, he was not only incapable of the indelicacy and presumption of building the shadow of a claim, or even hope, on the commands of Lord Wolderland; but that he would not, for worlds, owe her hand to any influence whatsoever. That the treasure, however inestimable, would be valueless in his eyes, unless it were her own free gift.

In reflecting thus, he had got back to the house. Here, however, he learnt that Miss Wentworth, with Lady Montville and a numerous party, had gone out for the morning. He informed himself of their destination, which was a show place in the neighbourhood, and mounting his horse, followed their traces.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRIGHT sun shone on the autumnal tinted foliage of many a stately tree in Ravensdale Park, through which flowed a noble river, wooded on one bank to the water's edge; and on the other, which was level, imparting freshness to the green turf.

On an eminence stood a ruined castle, and the two halves of a shattered oak, which, though still standing, and forming at their common root an acute angle, seemed to have been riven asunder by lightning.

From time to time a startled deer would emerge from a clump of wood, and gazing

round, bound across the open space, and enter an opposite grove; and when the bend of a gravel walk quitted cover, explorers would appear, generally in couples, and wander on, till they were again lost sight of beneath the trees.

The park-gate opened, and a gentleman on horseback entered. He proceeded along the principal approach at a moderate pace, looking around him in every direction. He soon discerned three figures emerge from the ruins, and take up a reconoitering position, on the brow of the eminence on which the castle stood.

His countenance became suddenly illumined. He flung himself from his horse, threw the bridle to his groom, and with the long, light, elastic step of health and youth, buoyant with hope, quickly gained the foot of the mound, and while the party above were looking along the path of its green slope, expecting his approach, stood beside them, having ascended the apparently inaccessible face of the rock, by

means of some slight irregularities of surface, which, to one innured to athletic exercises from infancy, afforded an excellent scaling ladder. Had the task, however, been a much more difficult one, he had been well repaid by the bright blush of surprise and pleasure, on the cheek of Catherine, and the radiant eyes, made still more sparkling by something like a tear, which it was impossible to doubt, had been caused by the startling thought, that he had just escaped danger.

But alas ! she held the arm of Lord Rosley, and Lady Emily was on her other side, so that he could only look at her, and speak to her across a third person. And shortly after, as they took the narrow path to descend the castle mound, they were obliged to separate into couples, and Lord Rosley retaining, with a dogged obstinacy, the arm of Catherine, Adrian, (for it was he,) felt himself compelled, by common politeness, to offer his to Lady Emily.

It being already late, and the carriages

being called for, as soon as the scattered parties assembled, no opportunity was afforded for one word apart.

During the drive home he took especial care, to ride beside the carriage which contained Catherine, and even to keep an arm resting on the frame of the window, to obviate all possibility of being supplanted ; but there were three other ladies in the carriage, which of course put it out of the question to hold private conversation with any one. He looked upon her countenance with an admiration, with which were mingled the new feelings of an almost permitted tenderness !

He spoke without knowing very well what he was saying ; merely to make her look up, for though her eyes fell again instantly beneath the something new and undefinable in his enquiring gaze, he thought that in meeting them thus for even a moment he might have a chance of divining what would be her reply when he should be able to speak to her alone.

By the time the party arrived at the Wolderlands, the dressing bell was already ringing, and the ladies, therefore, on descending from the carriages, hastily ascended the great stairs in a body, and thence shot off into various galleries.

CHAPTER IX.

DAYLIGHT had disappeared from the great saloon, and the fire was just in that sort of doze in which those drawing room sources of comfort are apt to indulge at this particular period of the day.

Adrian entered. He knew that she who he so ardently desired to speak with alone, was generally down before the rest of the guests ; he had therefore made his toilet as quickly as the mistake of a key, and consequent spoiling of a lock, would permit. After successively stumbling against a chair, a footstool, and the corner of an ottoman on his way through darkness visible, he approached the sleepy fire, and gave it

so thorough a poking up that the lately sombre apartment, was instantly filled with its comfortable light.

"How cheerful that is!" softly murmured a sweet, very sweet voice, close at his elbow.

Adrian started, and looking round, beheld, in the quiet corner of a sofa, Catherine herself! his own Catherine—she who was to be his wife—the partner of his existence—who was to share with him for life, the very home they now inhabited together; the very fire-side they now occupied together! Oh, with what emotions as these thoughts crowded rapidly into his mind, did he seat himself beside her, and nervously conscious that he had no time to lose, begin at once; and uttering rapidly, and in an agitated manner, say,

"How eagerly, dear Catherine, have I longed for this opportunity to speak to you for a moment alone. Lord Wolderland has—placed me—"

Here the door flew open, and three or four servants entered, and commenced busily lighting, and arranging the apartment.

"You were going to say something about grand-papa?" observed Catherine, anxiously. Adrian looked towards the servants, in a way which implied that their presence prevented his continuing. She was so used to kindness and advice from Adrian, that his manner did not put her on her guard.

"Tell me in a whisper," she persisted.

He smiled, but with an expression, the kindest, yet the strangest she had ever seen on his countenance.

"Because," she continued, with earnestness, "what makes me so desirous to know is, that I have just had a message, while dressing, commanding my attendance in the study to-morrow morning, after breakfast; and I am always so much afraid of grandpapa, I would give the world to know what it is all about. Can you imagine what he wants to say to me?"

Adrian smiled again, and her eagerly uplifted eyes met his. She cast them down —blushed—and forgot her grandfather; adding, without knowing particularly what she was saying:

"If I am foolish, you should not be so ill-natured as to laugh at me."

What infinite wisdom Adrian just then perceived in the arrangements of Lord Wolderland. The servants were still there, how he wished them away, as he gazed on the glossy ringlets, which half veiled the stooping countenance of Catherine, and watched the deep blush becoming each moment more and more intense; how certain did he feel that she would consent to be his, that she returned his affection.—Ecstasy enough for a lifetime was crowded into that delicious moment.

The last remaining servant was quitting the room: as the door closed, Adrian gently took her hand, and commenced in breathless agitation:

"I do not only know, dear Catherine,

what Lord Wolderland means to say to-morrow, but I am the person in the whole world, the most deeply interested in—"

Here the door opened again, and a servant entering, approached Catherine, and presented her a salver, on which two letters were laid; she took them with a look of alarm; broke the seal of one, saying it was from her father, as if in apology.

She had betrayed so much agitation at the sight of her letters, and before the retiring servant reached the door, was so absorbed in their perusal, that Adrian could not venture to interrupt her: and alas! he soon found new, and less agreeable occupation for his own thoughts. Those thoughts, however, would have been less torturing, could he have known the tremulous emotion, the flutterings of undefined hope, and all the thousand delightful feelings, which cruel associations, connected with the sight of those letters, had chased away from the heart of Catherine.

"Who can that other letter be from?"

he asked himself, as he watched her with painful anxiety. She seemed to him to glance over the letter she said was from her father somewhat hastily; she opened the second with nervous impatience—she colored—she became very pale—she read a part of it again—she refolded it with trembling fingers, she sighed heavily—then, after a moment's pause, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, exclaimed—" Oh, I wish papa had not insisted on my coming here."

" Mr. Wentworth is not ill, I hope," enquired Adrian.

"No, thank God, he is quite well," she replied, but in a desponding tone; then, with a sudden energy that startled Adrian, she added—" I wonder would grandpapa let me go home?" she paused, smiling faintly, then added—" Yes, if he could do that indeed."

Before, however, Adrian could devise what this soliloquy meant, much less attempt to draw her back to his own subject, the dinner party began to muster; and follow-

ing each other in quick succession, all chance of further conference was over. Adrian had become quite miserable.

"It was not on reading her father's letter," he thought, "that she changed colour; that she sighed; that she wished herself at home again: what can it mean?" and a sensation of indescribable dread and dreariness, came over him.

Hitherto, he had marked the enthusiasm, with which Catherine always spoke of home, with delighted admiration: he had ascribed it to her great affection for her father. But now he saw cause—with what feelings it may be imagined—to fear, that not only the sadness which had sometimes pained him; but also this captivating fervour and romance of manner, had been produced by the blending of other feelings, totally at variance with all his hopes. What an utter change from the elysium in which, but a few moments since, he was wrapped.

He struggled against the admission of this terrible idea. He recalled the downcast eyes, the mantling blush, the unresisting hand, which had all sent such delightful conviction to his heart; but the hideous spectre of a rival, all the more hideous for being young and handsome, the companion, perhaps, of her childish sports; who had grown up with her, which that fatal epistle had raised, would not be laid. Had she not a correspondent, whose letter had interested her more deeply than her father's? must there not, then, exist a being, dearer to her than her father? And who could have obtained such a preference, in such a heart as Catherine's? Scarcely an accepted, an affianced lover—certainly no more doubtful claimant!

He was aroused in the midst of these torturing thoughts, by the general movement of the company towards the dining room.

He looked up. Catherine was passing, with the assiduous Lord Rosley. Lady Emily sat near, still unclaimed. Adrian offered her his arm.

CHAPTER X.

It was evening. The brilliantly lighted saloon was occupied by ladies only, languidly lounging on the various sofas and ottomans.

A flower stand filled with beautiful exotics, and partially concealed by damask satin and lace draperies, stood in the recess of a distant window. In its fragrant vicinity was placed Catherine's harp, at which she was seated. Her fingers, though they moved rapidly, brought less tone than usual from the instrument, and there was a shade of melancholy on her features.

The gentlemen from the dining room began to drop in. Adrian, as usual, was one of the first.

He saw with satisfaction, the position Catherine had taken up. It would be favourable, he hoped, to his finding a moment to speak to her apart. Sheltered from observation by that obliging *jardiniere*, he might be able to discover how she would receive a direct declaration of his attachment; for, to pass the night in the state of mind, into which that mysterious letter had thrown him, would be impossible.

He drew near—he stood at the pillar of the harp.

Her voice was more thrilling than usual. To his prepared fancy, at least, it seemed to breathe the secret consciousness of loving and being beloved. Had it not been for that letter, with what delighted feelings would he have dared to suspect, that it was his own interrupted declaration which had given this touching tenderness to its tones.

They had become slightly tremulous, too, as he approached; and when she had looked up for an instant, there certainly was nothing in the gentle expression of that sweet face, from which could be inferred a determination to reject the offer of his heart and hand, which his manner had given her every right to expect, on the first convenient occasion. But the letter! the phantom letter! there it was, floating before him, and, as it were, intervening between his vision and the lovely features, on which he might else have read his happiness.

Beside those features had also another expression, less favourable to his hopes, for there was clearly some cause for apprehension, some source of premature sorrow, within that innocent young heart.

If she returned his affection, the knowledge that he loved her could not be a source of sorrow. At this thought all again was darkness.

The air concluded. She rose from the

instrument. Adrian painfully conscious of the immense importance, to himself at least, of what he had to say, lost his presence of mind. All the facility with which he had hitherto found moments innumerable to address Catherine aside, was gone. While he was advancing to make some comment on the flowers, by which he hoped to retain her near them; Lord Rosley, who had been waiting on the other side, engaged her in conversation. And Lady Montville, crossing the room at the same moment, to look for music on a stand near Adrian, he was of course obliged to assist her Ladyship, and having found the book, to carry it for her to the pianoforte, at which Lady Emily was taking her seat.

"Do have the kindness to turn the leaves for Emily," said Lady Montville, as he was placing the book on the desk. What was to be done? There was no refusing so direct a request from a lady! Behold him then, chained for the next quarter of an hour, to the back of Lady Emily's chair.

It must be confessed that he performed his task as badly as possible; never once turning a leaf, till asked to do so by the unhappy performer, who sometimes had to repeat her request a second time before she could rouse him; on which he would start, and turn over two leaves together, to compensate for past neglect.

This conduct may be accounted for by the fact, that he was all the while looking towards the flower-stand, behind which might be partly discerned Catherine and Lord Rosley in earnest conversation—at least Lord Rosley seemed very earnest. This was tantalizing in the extreme. To see the very spot on which he had fixed for ending his own cruel suspense, thus occupied by a rival.

Lord Rosley, who had in the commencement been standing with his back towards the rest of the party, had dexterously contrived, with apparent unconsciousness, to approach Catherine gradually, in speaking to her, in such a manner, as to induce her to

take step, by step, backwards, to avoid him; till at length, she found herself ensconced in the depths of the window recess.

"It is quite impossible, Miss Wentworth," he continued, who was by this time getting angry at his non success, "that you can plead ignorance of my intentions. My admiration has always been openly declared."

"I thought every one knew Lady Montville's intentions," replied Catherine, "and therefore did not suppose, that your Lordship's attentions could have any further meaning than politeness."

Lord Rosley affected to laugh, though in no laughing humour.

"So you really took me for a good little boy, who could never dream of doing anything but what his mama bid him?"

"It can be of very little consequence what I thought, my Lord. Now that you have clearly explained yourself; and that I have decidedly declined the honour you intended me—there can be no use in pro-

longing a discussion painful to us both—permit me to pass."

She was a good deal provoked at having been for sometime detained a prisoner by the impossibility of gliding between the flower-stand and Lord Rosley without contact with the latter. He withdrew the arm with which, on pretext of playing with the fragrant leaves of the plants, he had hitherto barred the passage. Catherine made her escape, and there being a vacant seat near Lady Montville took possession of it.

Lord Wolderland, in the meantime, was observing with marked impatience what he conceived to be, the close attendance of Adrian on Lady Emily. Lady Montville pointed out his Lordship, saying with an amused smile:

"How angry your grand-father looks. But he need not make himself uneasy—I shall not allow Emily to interfere with his arrangements."

Catherine looked surprised.

"I see, my dear, you are distressed," continued Lady Montville, "but I assure you you have nothing to fear—Should Mr. Wentworth carry this whim so far as to propose for Emily, she has my positive commands to refuse him.

"Besides, I do not really think he feels any serious preference for her. It is merely that he finds her more a woman of the world! Youth and innocence, though you are sweet, dear girl, are not sufficient for him at present, he has been spoiled a good deal abroad, but all that will find its level."

Catherine comprehended very little of this harangue; but she certainly felt both pained and insulted; and coloured excessively; the music, however, affording a good excuse for not replying, she watched her opportunity, and as soon as Lady Montville looked in another direction, made her escape, and sought her own room. She had her terrible letter to answer, before going to bed; for if she did not do so,

she should have no chance of sleeping. But should she have much chance even when that duty should be accomplished ? Were it not that youth and a good conscience, go a great way towards inducing "Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," the question might be answered in the negative ; fer, certainly, she had many and mixed subjects for reflection. Adrian's manner before dinner had awakened in her heart the most delightful emotions she had ever known ; but how soon had these been crushed by the perusal of that letter; since which, she had not had a quiet moment to collect her thoughts ; and lastly, Lady Montville's words, though but very imperfectly understood, had not tended to tranquillise her spirits. On the contrary, they had caused clouds to close upon that sole spot of her horizon, over which hope, like a young moon, had so lately arisen.

The idea had never before presented itself, of Adrian's having a preference for Lady Emily ; but it might be true, not-

withstanding! Might not such a preference be perfectly compatible with the kindness of his manner, and conduct towards herself; which might proceed entirely from friendliness, relationship, and his very considerate disposition, which made him always remember that she was inexperienced, and had no one to advise her but himself. Did this solution produce comfortable feelings? or hasten the approaches of sleep? or when sleep did come, did it brighten the dreams of Catherine? certainly not! Lady Montville, notwithstanding her declarations, that she would not allow the arrangements of Lord Wolderland to be interfered with; had every intention of setting them aside herself, if possible.

Her ladyship saw clearly that Adrian loved his cousin, and that she returned his preference; but she mistook his sympathising manner towards Lady Emily, for a sort of secondary liking which might be worked up into a matrimonial affair, provided that Catherine, in all the fervour of

wounded pride and youthful romance, could be piqued into rejecting his addresses; under the impression that he preferred Lady Emily, though he had determined to marry her, from compliance with Lord Wolderland's views of family aggrandizement.

Her ladyship was very impatient to make up a desirable match for her daughter; for she had many reasons to dread, despite her summary dismisal of Beaumont, and his present indignation; that were he to adopt the entreating tone, Lady Emily might take courage and elope with him. She saw that though her daughter had the genuine spirit of a coquette, and could not endure life without a lover at her feet; that she yet loved Beaumont devotedly; and that to leave him without a rival, was to ensure his success.

CHAPTER XI.

THE morning was lovely; countless birds sang in sweet chorus; and some sheep that grazed at a distance, under the large trees of the park, made an agreeable melody by the tinckling sound of their tuned bells. A bend of the river passed near the house; its sloping bank was dotted with flowering shrubs, enclosed by a slight wire fence, forming a sort of grass garden.

Adrian, who had been a denizen of this wilderness of sweets for the last hour, still stood among standard roses watching the half-open glass door of the conservatory. How often had the being with whom he now

breathlessly longed to exchange a few words, appeared gliding forth from that same half-open door; her gentle face greeting him with innocent smiles, that made the sun seem brighter; the song of the birds sweeter: and the perfume of the flowers more delicious. Then, wandering arm in arm, how often had they left the little wire gate of the grass garden far behind, and strolled together along the river's shady banks. But now there was nothing but difficulty and disappointment. In vain he still gazed on the half-opened door. There stood the same cactus grandi florus, occupying the same place on the first range of the green stand; but no Catherine appeared. He felt inclined to be unjust, and take a great dislike to the poor cactus. At length the unwelcome sound of the breakfast bell was heard. For that morning, at least, it was the knell of all his hopes—she would not visit the flower garden after that bell had rung. Through the conservatory he passed into the hall. The object of his thoughts

was just crossing it, with a letter in her hand. As he bade her good morning, she was in the act of laying the epistle on a table, on which were several others, for it was the family receiving-office for the post. By a sort of spell his eyes unintentionally followed the little, white hand, and without his meaning to be a spy, read on the back of the letter the words—"Jean Lyoncourt, Esq., Lyme Regis."

All his worst fears were at once confirmed. There could no longer be a doubt. Her correspondent must be one to whom she was not only attached but affianced; or why answer his letter before her father's. Why, indeed, should so young a girl correspond at all with a gentleman, unless engaged to him.

Alas! how utterly without hope did the entire prospective of existence appear.

Should he still attempt to prepare her for the interview with Lord Wolderland—or should he await its result—but of what to choose—both alternatives must, he now

felt convinced, end in despair. He had not, however, the option. She proceeded to the breakfast-room instantly; and before she had risen from table, she received an imperative summons to attend her grandfather without delay.

CHAPTER XII.

In the splendid library already described, seated on his coronet-backed, and throne-like chair, with his roll of paper, as before, in his hand; Lord Wolderland awaited his granddaughter, looking at himself the while in the opposite mirror, with infinitely more complacency than he had ever been known to look at any other person.

The trembling girl entered, and drew near as hesitatingly as if she had been approaching the footstool of a sovereign.

The request she had so long wished to prefer, and which had been the chief object of her visit to the Wolderlands, she

had not yet dared to mention; for she had never once been alone with her grandfather, and as to her asking for an interview, it was quite out of the question.

Now she was fortunately summoned to his presence, at a crisis when the business could no longer be delayed, and whatever it was, therefore, that his Lordship might be going to say to her, she must avail herherself of the opportunity, and lay her own petition at his feet. Pompously, as if in doing so he were performing a wonderful act of condescension; his lordship ordered her to be seated. He then informed her that she would have no occasion to reply; that silence, and submission, were all that could be expected at her age, and from her sex: and even deigned to enlarge on the privilege of being thus exempt from care; while the grave and important considerations, of keeping together family properties, and directing the descent of family honours, was a burden born exclusively by the noble heads of noble

families. Out of this exordium, he passed, by an easy transition, into a long and abusive tirade, on the disobedience, and insolence of her father; and on the worthlessness of the person he had dared to marry, in not giving birth to a son; the only service which, as he lost no opportunity of observing, a woman in that rank of life, could have rendered to the noble family, into which she had had the bare-faced impudence, to intrude herself.

He next informed his hearer, that the duty of repairing these manifold evils, had devolved on her; and then, with the same full details of his family reasons, which he had already given to Adrian, announced to her, his intention, of marrying her to Mr. Wentworth.

For a portion of one second only, the heart of Catherine beat with a strange, but joyful emotion! The hints of Lady Montville were remembered, and the heart stood as suddenly quite still.

What then was her distress, as his lord-

ship went on to inform her, that he had explained all this in the fullest manner to Mr. Wentworth; who had yielded to the strength of his arguments, respecting the necessity of uniting the titles and estates in the person of their common descendent. That, in fact, it was before this unanswerable argument that Mr. Adrian Wentworth's objections to the match had given way.

Catherine became crimson, then deadly pale, in nearly the same moment.

"Else," continued his lordship, "Mr. Wentworth would, it seems, have preferred an extinction of the family connections—a marriage with Lady Emily Rosley for instance."

Catherine felt her cheeks as cold as marble. And heard her grandfather's voice, as if removed to a distance. She longed to say that she should never marry. That Mr. Wentworth was perfectly at liberty to form any connection he pleased; but she neither dared, nor was able to articulate a word.

"Mr. Adrian Wentworth," continued his lordship, "has sense enough to understand my arrangements; and respect enough for the noble family to which he belongs, to make any sacrifice of whim, or inclination, that may be necessary. You are not therefore to fancy, every time he hands Lady Emily Rosley down to dinner; or turns over the leaves of her music, that he means to pay her serious attention. Her ladyship has seen more of the world than you have, and is, of course, more capable of conversing with a young man of ability—as Mr. Wentworth certainly is—than a girl like yourself can be. And young men in this free thinking age are apt to be impelled a little, by the spirit of contradiction, on those points, that is to say, in trifles; perhaps they prefer any one to the person pointed out to them; but in a step so serious as marriage, a sensible young man, like Mr. Wentworth, will be guided by prudential considerations, and the advice of the head of the family."

Poor Catherine felt more miserable and more mortified than she had ever done in the whole course of her life. She made up her mind, however, in secret, and derived wonderful consolation from the spirited resolve, to reject Mr. Adrian Wentworth's magnanimous sacrifice of inclination to interest, the moment he should give her an opportunity: but she dared not utter one word of opposition to her grandpapa, to whom she had still her petition to prefer, one which at this moment, pressed so sorely that even Adrian's contempt for herself, and preference of another, held but a secondary place in her thoughts; while desperation, if it did not give her courage, at least drove her to brave her fears. She sank on her knees at Lord Wolderland's footstool, "I ask the pardon of my dear father," she said, "Oh, grandpapa, he is at this moment," and she lowered her voice, "in danger of going to gaol! For years past it has been by sufferance, only, that he has enjoyed his personal liberty; and

now that sufferance is about to cease! Indeed grandpapa there are people at this moment furnished with legal authority to arrest him! Do have pity on poor papa! and pay his debts, this once! only this once!"

His Lordship had listened with a species of grim smile.

"Whoever lodges my rebellious son in gaol," he replied, pompously; "shall have my best thanks. And once there, he shall remain till my death release him! 'Tis the just reward of his disobedience. Let the salutary lesson, teach you submission."

"Oh, grandpapa, you do not mean what you say!" exclaimed Catherine, dropping her hands, and raising her streaming eyes to his face.

With all the solemnity of one, who was calling on heaven to witness a worthy resolve, his Lordship swore to let his only son die in a gaol, rather than afford him the smallest relief; adding:

"We shall see then, how his chancery

suit will prosper—the fellow—how dare he go to law with his father!"

Catherine gazed on her grandfather, with an astonishment bordering on incredulity. She had been flattering herself, ever since she had been at the Wolderlands, that if she could but obtain an opportunity like the present, and have the courage to ask her father's pardon on her knees, and explain the urgency of the danger, that her grandpapa could not refuse to forgive him, and pay his debts. It was a terrible undertaking; a last resource; and now that last resource had failed!" All then must depend on whatever she could do herself, she thought, of trying to pacify those people. She now, therefore, entreated permission to go home.

"I shall not only not permit your departure at present," replied Lord Wolderland, "but, if you ever dare to repeat the request, or show, in any way, the remotest symptom of disobedience or discontent, I

shall never allow your return to what you please to call your home—a home of your rebellious father's making; but which is no proper position for *my* granddaughter, and (in some measure,) heiress. And should I see cause to forbid your return, I shall instruct your trustees to stop the five hundred per. annum, which I have hitherto permitted to be paid to your father, solely for your education and maintenance."

"But you know, grandpapa," she repeated, innocently, "there is nothing else for papa to live upon, he would starve! he would die!"

"Let him starve! let him die!" replied his Lordship, "and if I find that he has taught you to follow his example, and rebel against my commands, starvation will be too good for the fellow; he shall not only starve, but starve in gaol; for I shall order him to be arrested for the arrears received, unless he can show (which of course he cannot,) that every shilling has been ex-

pended on *you*, and *you* only. You want three years of being of age, and while you are a minor, your trustees have the power of putting your father in gaol in your name, and on your behalf—and this shall be done if you provoke me, and also, all correspondence between yourself and your father stopped. And now you may leave the room!"

She did so, in a state of consternation not to be described. Leisure of mind to be thoroughly wretched would have been luxury, compared with her torn and distracted feelings.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADRIAN was standing near a window in the breakfast room, with a newspaper in his hand, which he seemed to read; but it was only seeming, for the door was open, and from it he watched that of the library. He had tried to conjecture—he had tried not to conjecture—he had tried, but in vain, to compose his thoughts for the coming interview. At length, the handle of the library door moved. His heart beat vehemently. The door opened, and Catherine appeared; but in such uncontrollable emotion, that he dared not attempt to intercept her passage, as he had

intended. She therefore crossed the hall, and ascended the stairs.

How was he to interpret that expression of almost wild despair—that wringing of the hands, that appealing look towards heaven? Had she loved him, as he had once fondly hoped, she might have been surprised, even displeased at the abruptness of her grandfather's announcement of what ought to have come first from himself; but still, joyful anticipations of a future crowned with serious happiness, would have been, as in his own case, the predominant feeling. His worst conjectures, then, must be true. Her correspondent must be an accepted lover, to whom she must be seriously attached; and the fear of being compelled, by the tyrannical commands of her grandfather, to marry another, must be what thus distressed her; yet how was he to account for the evident pleasure with which she had received his attentions. What was he to think? Could it be mere friendship? Gratified vanity it

could not be, she had a mind superior to that! The gratitude of the very young was so fervent,so enthusiastic, that it might possibly assume the appearance of love! She had perhaps, been glad to find among total strangers, any one who sympathized with her, who was ready to give her advice, without laughing at her inexperience. And was all his store of happiness reduced to this!

The Duke of Ravensdale was passing through the hall with a prospectus in his hand. Seeing Adrian, he approached him, saying:

"I like your idea of a provisional society to improve, as far as possible, the existing means of education, while waiting for the passing of a government measure, always a tedious affair."

Adrian, on hearing himself addressed, started, like one awaking from a frightful dream.

"Yes," he replied, "we must do the little good we can, while waiting for power

to do more; or life, I fear, would glide past with many of us without usefulness."

The Duke who was improving old schools, and establishing new ones on his own estates, took a lively interest in the education question; on which Adrian was beginning to be considered an authority.

He took his arm, and an hour after the two figures might still be seen sauntering together under the great trees of the Park in earnest conversation.

CHAPTER XIV.

Poor Catherine—her fast falling tears blotting out the words which her trembling fingers were attempting to trace—sat at a writing-table in her own room. Overwhelmed by a crushing sense of helplessness, she had been striving, by a thousand times renewed promises, to re-assure those on whom she believed the safety of her father to depend.

The rapid movement of her pen was suspended—Had her cruel grand-father, she thought, granted her prayer, she had been spared this painful task.

There was no truth, she told her correspondent, in the report of her intended marriage with Mr. Adrian Wentworth.

Again she paused.

He waves his objections! she thought—He is guided by the advice of the head of the family—*He is a sensible young man*—Were she perfectly free, she should reject the offer of his hand with scorn, under such circumstances.

Here, dashing the tears from her eyes, she applied herself to her task with redoubled diligence. She had no time, she told herself, for such foolish thoughts—her letter must go by the first post.

CHAPTER XV.

THE side-board laden with gold and silver plate; the table groaning with every luxury that a munificent expenditure could provide, and surrounded by distinguished guests, the solemn ceremony of dinner at the Wolderlands was being *performed.* Lord Wolderland was looking if possible more pompous than usual, as he glanced from beneath his haughty, downcast lids towards his grand-daughter; whose existence he had began to deem it a less condescension to recognise, since he had fully determined, that she should become the mother of a future Lord Wolderland! Adrian too, he observed was seated next to her, a mark

of deference to his wishes, of which he approved.

The place had been secured by the unhappy lover in the hope of being able to whisper a request for an interview; but he could not even meet the eyes of Catherine for a moment. Her avoidance of him was intentional—Yet he did not occupy her thoughts exclusively. She felt the splendour that surrounded her oppressive; and shuddered as she contrasted it with the actual circumstances of her dear father, subject to hourly demands he could not meet; and, consequently, to insult, and even imprisonment, for the commonest necessaries of life —while it was the hand which inflicted this suffering and degradation, on his own son, that was lavishing all she saw, on hosts of strangers—and, inexperienced as she was, she could perceive, not from any wish to make even them happy; but merely to convince them of *their* inferiority. Oh! how did she long for the simplicity of her own dear home—only freed from the fear

of bailiffs—those frightful shapes, which had haunted her imagination even in childhood.

The ladies having retired, Lord Wolderland, who was in a good humour for him, condescended to patronise his young relative, by addressing to him some remarks upon the education question.

"Are you doing justice to the system, you wish ultimately to see established, Mr. Wentworth," asked his Lordship, "in proposing, in the meantime, those piecemeal amendments of existing institutions? Are you not likely thus, to fritter away some portion of the credit, which might ultimately be accorded to your great measure, should it be carried?"

Adrian smiled slightly, and replied:

"I have not exactly looked at the question in that point of view, my Lord. It appears to me so much more important, than the opinion entertained of an individual or his measures, that any little good which can be achieved, should be realized as soon as possible."

"That may be," rejoined his Lordship, "but you see the force of my argument."

"Were it only learning that were at stake," replied Adrian, "we might take patience. But the question of education, viewed as a moral agent, is one which will *not* keep. Legislators may delay to direct, but cannot stay the influence of circumstances on character. Consequently, one or more generations may be lost, while we are discussing the best means for their preservation."

Lord Wolderland, being posed for a reply, changed the subject by addressing another person, with the air of a host, who extends his protection to all his guests.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE saloon was even less animated, than at the same hour on the previous evening; for, though the graceful harp stood as before, grouped with the flower stand, and falling draperies of the distant window, its fair mistress drew no melody from its chords. She was seated at a little work-table, between Lady Emily Rosley and another very pretty girl, both of whom were vieing with each other, in the useful occupation of converting five pounds worth of brilliant coloured worsteds, into five shillings worth of very pretty carpeting; while Catherine, with equally com-

mendable assiduity, was transforming five shillings worth of netting silk, into a purse worth one shilling. Her cheeks, as she bent over her work, looked as white as her delicate fingers: she sighed, and all being silent at the moment, Lady Emily was puzzled.

Now, Lord Wolderland's arrangements, as he called them, were, by this time, pretty well known to every one. Catherine's altered countenance and manner, therefore, made her Ladyship suspect that those arrangements could not be altogether agreeable to her. She had hitherto believed the cousins to be very much attached to each other; but now she saw that there must be some hitch somewhere. Possibly, after all, her mother might be right—perhaps it was herself that Mr. Wentworth really admired. And here, though all the heart she had ever possessed, had long since been given to another, the spirit of coquetry stirred in her breast, and made the thought of conquest—and

such a conquest!—agreeable to her: especially during the absence and resentment of Beaumont, which she was beginning to find dull.

Just at this moment Adrian made his appearance—herald of a coming invasion from the dining-room.

On entering the drawing-room, he looked towards the distant window, with its graceful draperies. There stood the harp, deserted like that of "Tara's halls," and the fragrant flower-stand, "wasting its sweetness on the desert air." Thence, his glance quickly performing the circuit of the room, fell on the already-mentioned table. A few moments after, his figure was added to the group formed by its occupants.

Lady Emily's eyes gave him a sparkling welcome. But he sought those of another, and sought them in vain.

He lingered, however, and seemed to have become this evening, as great an amateur of fancy works, as he had been the evening before of music.

He asked questions respecting the graduating of shades; gave an opinion as to the colour of a ground; and patiently watched, or seemed to watch foliage and flower; stitch after stitch slowly progressing beneath the fingers of the fair manufacturers of footstools.

It must be confessed, however, that all the while he kept, like most men, an eye on the purse. We mean that over which the third lady bent, and while she did so, looked dangerously beautiful! for what colour so brilliant or so becoming as the deep blush of emotion, mantling on a fair cheek, which the moment before had been perfectly pale, also from emotion. He hazarded a remark on the tints of the netting silk. It was vain; the eyes of Catherine remained fixed on her work. He asked a direct question, respecting the time it took to net a purse. She was very busy disentangling a knotted skein of silk, and replied without looking up. He offered his assistance; she declined it gently; but

as just at the moment she had mislaid a netting mesh, for which she was searching about, looking now on one side, now on the other, he still found it impossible to meet her eyes. In short, he saw that she wished to avoid him; and he saw, also, that she was unhappy. There was something in her whole manner, ever since she had known her grandfather's intentions, which left him without a hope. But he must, notwithstanding, seek an interview. An explanation was due both to her and to himself.

Lady Emily, on his services in disentangling the silk, being declined, looked up, with the arch smile of a finished coquette, and said, showing a skein of worsted:

"Well, as you are out of employment, I will be charitable, and give you this to hold while I wind it;" so saying, she encircled his wrists with a fleecy chain, and began twisting the thread round a long fold of paper, with which, from time to time, she playfully tapped his fingers, as a chastisement for his real or alleged awkwardness. Lord Wol-

derland who had just come up from the dining-room with the last of his guest, passed on with a frown to the sofa, at the upper end of the room, where Lady Montville had been remarking to a friend near her, on the uncontrollable admiration of Mr. Wentworth for Emily. While Adrian endured his bondage with politeness, but made up his mind that his compassionate attentions must cease, as there seemed to be a possibility of their being misunderstood.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE morning was beautiful. So fresh, so bright, it seemed as if all the world ought to be happy. Yet Adrian was far from being so, as loitering about the lawn, he kept the path to the flower garden in view. He blamed himself too for permitting his mind to be thus unnerved, thus rendered unfit for occupation or even reflection. But to contend with his feelings at this crisis, he knew must be vain. He was as reasonable to himself as to all others: he must know his fate, before he could require of himself to meet it manfully. The explanation he sought once obtained, he

was resolved to take the reins of his mind once more under his own control.

As he came to this wise determination the breakfast bell rang, and he hastened back to the entrance hall. Catherine was crossing it, just at the moment, with, this time, two letters in her hand. As she was placing them, on the already mentioned table, for the post, a corner of her handkerchief got under them, and drawing them off again, they fell to the ground. Common politeness exacted, that Adrian should fly to pick them up. In doing so, it was impossible not to see, that one of them was addressed, as that of yesterday, to Jean de Lyoncourt, Esqr., Lyme Regis.

Had Adrian's worst fears needed confirmation, this circumstance would have sufficed. To what correspondent but an accepted and affianced lover would she think of writing again, the very next day!

This, however, did not shake his resolve, of coming to an explanation.

When the party rose from the break-

fast table, therefore, he started as from a dream, and, braving the risk of being observed, followed Catherine, bent over her shoulder, and requested, in a low and earnest whisper, that she would grant him an interview.

Feeling the necessity of compliance, though terrified at the task, she turned aside into the conservatory, and began, in silence, crushing the leaves of a geranium.

He stood beside her, and for some moments was also silent. He already knew what must be her reply, he thought, he had only to make the scene as little painful to her as possible.

At length, he said,

"I have requested this interview, Miss Wentworth, from anxiety to assure you, that I am quite incapable of pleading your grandfather's arrangements, which I see have caused you so much uneasiness, as giving me any shadow of claim, to being favourably heard by you. Could I indeed—"

Here Catherine, with a species of desperation, compelled herself to interrupt him, by saying,

"With respect to my grandfather's arrangements, Mr. Wentworth, I have been equally impatient for this opportunity, to inform you, decidedly, that I cannot enter into them; and that, therefore, you are as perfectly free, to make any other connection that may suit your views, as if Lord Wolderland had never formed such plans."

Then, sustained by pride and pique, she went on:—

"I have been very anxious to say this, because my silence to Lord Wolderland, might have made you think that I had consented. But I assure you that I never can consent! There are obstacles, which existed before we met, which are quite insurmountable. So I must beg you will never mention the subject to me again. I was afraid to tell my grandfather; he is apt to be so very angry."

Simple as were her expressions, her re-

jection of his hand, was explicit. There was also a haughtiness, a something like displeasure in her tone and manner, which surprised Adrian. He was prepared for a gentle, compassionate dismissal; but not for this.

"May I not be permitted," he said, "to ask, whether I have had the misfortune to offend Miss Wentworth? or whether her rejection of my addresses is caused simply by the insurmountable obstacles of which she speaks?"

"Why should I be offended?" she rejoined, evasively, though she thought he ought not to have *seemed* to love her, if he did not—not have wished her to marry him, merely as a convenient family arrangement.

"You have always been most friendly," she continued, "in giving me good advice, from consideration—I quite understand—for my ignorance of the world; but still it was kind and brotherly." she added, in a voice that now began to falter; for she was

subdued by a sense of her helplessness, having a great favour to ask, despite her feeling of pique.

"I hope," she went on, "that you will continue to act the part of a brother; for at present I have much need of a friend, and you are the only one who can help me."

"If it be in my power, Miss Wentworth," he replied, "to be serviceable to you, or to contribute, in any way, to your happiness, I shall indeed esteem it an enviable privilege."

"It *is* in your power to do me the greatest service, the greatest kindness!" she said, with sudden earnestness, setting aside pique, pride, and every consideration, but that of her father's imminent danger, should Lord Wolderland become acquainted with her disobedience to his wishes. "It is in your power to save me from the anger of my grandfather, by taking upon yourself the whole blame

of setting aside these arrangements of his."

"Can such want of candour be necessary?" he asked, with an air of surprise.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "he has already uttered threats of the most horrible nature —if it were only myself, I would not mind—but the vengeance would fall on—"

Here sobs interrupted her words.

"It would cause his death—I know it would—I can not bear to think of it—"

Unable to proceed further, and afraid she had said too much already, she stopped, hid her face in her hands, and wept with uncontrollable violence.

"For heaven's sake," he said, "tell me what you wish! There is no effort I would not make for your happiness."

"I cannot explain further," she replied, her speech still broken by sobs. "I am sure he would not like me to do so—I would not have mentioned a word—only I am so much afraid of my grandfather—he is so vindictive—he says he will take ad-

vantage of my not being of age, to send him to prison—think how dreadful! Oh! if you will be a friend to me in this extremity, you must only take the whole blame upon yourself; and, whatever you may understand or guess, from what I have been compelled to say, never mention the subject to any one—not even to my father himself."

"Not mention the subject to your father!" exclaimed Adrian, in utter amazement.

Poor Catherine, full of her dear father's danger, and her own plans for his deliverance, had hampered her expressions, from delicacy in not exposing his money difficulties, and seeming to ask assistance, without mentioning her, on her own account, generous intentions, never once remembered that the pronouns *he* and *him*, could stand for any other male being, in the imagination of Adrian.

"I see," she added, colouring, and continuing to weep, "that you think me very wrong—but—I can't help it—"

"Forgive me! I have no right to interfere, nor do I wish to pry: and as for Lord Wolderland, he has an impatient temper; it might be painful to speak to him, but for heaven's sake, explain everything to your father."

"But I know his opinion already; therefore, I must—in this one circumstance—act first without consulting him, and afterwards, I am sure, he cannot be very angry; and what is money, after all, compared with peace of mind! I only wish I were of age, and I would soon end all this misery."

And with streaming eyes, she looked up imploringly in Adrian's face; but saw no approving sympathy there.

He stood confounded. He knew not in what words to express, without impertinence, his unqualified disapprobation of Miss Wentworth's determination, thus openly declared, to marry for love, without her father's consent or knowledge, as soon as she should be of age, trusting to his

after forgiveness: for what other construction could he put upon her expressions; while all her tears and her agitation, were, it would seem, caused by her fears, lest Lord Wolderland should send her lover to prison, for marrying an heiress under age. Hence, he thought, the necessity of waiting till she should attain her majority, and, in the meanwhile, of keeping the affair a profound secret.

"I do not see," he said, at length, "that I have any resource, at present, but silence. I have no right to betray the partial confidence, with which you have been, as you say, compelled to honour me. But if on the strength of our relationship, and the friendship you have hitherto granted me, and which you are kind enough to say, it is your wish should continue uninterruptedly; and also from this accident, which seems thus to have rendered me the sole guardian of your inexperience; if, I say, from all these circumstances, I might venture to offer my advice, I would once more

implore you to have no secrets from your father. Indeed, I am not sure, that I should myself feel justified, in keeping silence towards him. But that your majority being still at a distant period, you will have time, I trust, to reconsider that point. As for the anger of Lord Wolderland, I will take care that it shall not reach you—so far as the setting aside of his Lordship's arrangements, I mean."

"I thank you!—I thank you!" she exclaimed, earnestly. "And do not renew this subject! Your doing so would force me to seem ungrateful."

Here, being about to quit the conservatory, she held out her hand in token of their parting friends.

He took the hand, and detained her, saying solemnly:

"This subject then is to be henceforward interdicted. It is your wish; I shall, therefore, hold that wish sacred. But before we part—before the seal is set on my lips; I owe to you, and to myself, a distinct de-

claration of my sentiments, (however useless under the circumstances), for without this you might believe me capable of having devoted myself to you with every seeming manifestation of attachment; and finally sought your hand, merely at the suggestion of Lord Wolderland, and with views of interest and convenience resembling his—You would have done me an immense injustice! I loved you, Miss Wentworth, with a truth, and depth that no language can paint. I loved you for yourself—I loved you, because I had studied your character, and seen in you that sweetness of disposition, and traced in you that nobleness of sentiment, that elevation of mind, which have ever been the objects of my ideal worship. I loved you with feelings of veneration, which had followed the spirit of my angel mother to a better world, nor returned to earth till my attachment to you recalled them thither. I loved you thus, and would have sought your love, and demanded your hand, from the thorough,

the delightful conviction, that the feelings I entertain towards you, and which by means of many associations and sympathies, commenced from the first moment I beheld you, are such as would have gifted me with the power, as with a holy inspiration, of being to you, through life, all that could render an amiable and virtuous wife happy. That vision of bliss is vanished for ever! I shall feel my disappointment bitterly!—But I shall struggle against it, I hope, manfully—and, when I have recovered the tone of my mind; try to forget self, in being of some use to others. And now, I entreat you to believe, that your happiness, without one selfish thought, has been the honest motive of the advice I have ventured to offer; and which I now, once more, repeat: Have no secrets from your father!"

The expression of her countenance puzzled him. It was certainly not that of sorrow; though her beautiful eyes, as they were raised to his, with a look the kindest, the

gentlest he had ever seen them express; were filled with tears. Her hand, too, lingered in his; even when he had meant to let it go. In short, if she had not already distinctly rejected him, he would have believed himself beloved!

Indeed, so powerful was the fascination of that look; that he did forget, for one blissful moment, all that had just passed; and was in the act of raising the hand he still held to his lips, and expressing rapturous thanks for the acceptance that was beaming in her eyes—when the sound of several voices approaching the conservatory laughing and conversing, obliged the startled and conscious Catherine to snatch her hand away, and fly to seek concealment for her tears, and burning blushes, in her own room.

As she broke from Adrian, the bright gleam of joy, which had for a second lighted up his heart, vanished. "Of what folly! of what madness! was I on the point of being guilty?" he asked himself, as he

hastened down the walk of the garden. She feels for my disappointment, no doubt, he thought, continuing to struggle with the strange tumultuous emotions which had so nearly mastered him. I was at the moment expressing my anxiety for her happiness, she could not, therefore, hastily withdraw her hand, without a degree of unkindness which it is not in her nature to evince towards any one. But despite these conclusive arguments, he still seemed to feel her soft hand within his, refusing to avail itself of the liberty which the relaxing of his had offered it.—He still seemed to see her eyes before him, full of that indefinable expression, which would have urged him to follow her and request a further explanation, had there been a pretext left him, or a possibility of mistake; but her rejection had been too explicit, too decided for this. His agitation, notwithstanding, continuing, he betook himself to a fresh examination of the subject; and, as an effort to regain some degree of composure,

by crushing the irrational promptings of a hope against conviction, repeated again and again, each word and sentence she had uttered, during their late interview.

While occupied by these thoughts, he had instinctively fled the intruders, crossed the grass garden, passed through the wire gate, and was pursuing the little path, which ran along the bank of the river.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CATHERINE, her countenance irradiated by one blissful thought, was seated in her own room; her eyes raised, her hands clasped in an attitude of fervent and rapturous thankfulness.

From time to time, she would repeat, in a low half audible murmur. He loves me! —He loves me! after which she would remain like one entranced, a gentle smile on her slightly parted lips, the soft suffusion of tender tears moistening her mild eyes, and glistening on her glowing cheek.

"Yes, this is happiness enough for me!" she ejaculated. And again she remained motionless. The gentle smile brightened,

"When next we meet," she thought, "he will tell me again that he loves me!" And her heart beat so violently that she began to feel almost afraid to encounter so great a felicity! Was it fear? or was it impatience or was it both?

But she must go down to dinner, she thought, and then, he will be in the drawing-room—and, if there be no one else come down, he will expect me to answer him—Here she looked alarmed!

"I can tell him, that I am not so ungrateful—so unkind as he must have thought me—I may say that much—That will not be wrong." She paused, and again sat motionless.

But this time, her thoughts went on—on—on. The gentle smile faded. The glowing cheek paled—and the soft suffusion in the uplifted eyes, collected into large tears and fell, drop by drop, on the hand that lay listlessly on her knee, while the other supported her brow. Promises, letters, parchment deeds, came crowding into her memory.

Candour, honour—she felt, demanded a full explanation of all this. How would it be taken? Her dear father's safety, too, must be the first, the paramount consideration. Then would her father approve of Mr. Wentworth being made acquainted with his difficulties? And would it be delicate on her part? Would it not amount almost to asking his assistance? Would it not, in short, be tantamount to begging him to lend her father money—and was this a step that a young girl could take—oh, no! His loving her would not make it more right—she had some notion that it might make it more wrong—would it not be like a sort of bargain and sale of her consent—of her love! Why, then, should she wish to hear again that fond and passionate declaration of his attachment which, for a short space, had made her heart so full of joy that there had been no room for its habitual habitants, fear for the safety of her dear father; and anxiety how to act herself, so as best to ward off danger from him.

It had ever been thus with poor Catherine; she could hardly remember the time that her young heart had not been oppressed by a load almost too heavy to be borne. How often, long before her visit to the Wolderlands, when looking on the sunshine and the flowers, and hearing the singing of the birds, she had experienced a momentary bounding of the youthful spirits, had she also felt at the same instant, their sudden check by this sad thought, this constant, secret fear for her dear father's safety; this premature and unnatural responsibility resting on herself, which for poor Catherine had thus from childhood upwards, resembled the cruel chain attached by the bird fancier to the bosom of his little victim; punishing with an instant pang, each instinctive effort to expand its wings, and rejoice in its native element.

CHAPTER XIX.

We left Adrian hastening along the pathway, on the bank of the river. The spot he had by this time reached, was one to which he had often accompanied Catherine.

He stood gazing on the flow of the water, and almost accusing himself of presumption because unwilling to accuse her of coquetry; yet all around forcibly recalled impressions proving that he had more than hoped, that he had felt a certainty that his affection was returned. He mused—he lingered, as it were, around the precincts of hope. Yet what further explanation could he demand? Her refusal was as distinct, as deliberate, as

it was possible for language to express. The circumstances, too, gave additional weight to her words.

Since her interview with Lord Wolderland, she had had a day and a night for reflection. Her declaration that obstacles existed, and had existed before they had ever met, rendering it impossible for her to enter into her grandfather's plans, was not, therefore, the hasty expression of a young creature, alarmed and surprised, at a too abrupt proposition; or even of one —for he had thought, for a moment, there was an air of pique—offended that the avowal of attachment did not, in the first instance, come from himself. Her reply was evidently prepared. She scarcely waited for him to open the subject. Nor could it be that he was a stranger in her eyes; and that further acquaintance might change her resolve, for she was evidently gratified with, and grateful for, what she was pleased to call his kindness as a relative.

No, it must be her devoted attachment, her secret engagement to another, which filled her with such cruel agitation and alarm, when he was presented to her, in the light of a future husband; while, at the same time, her gentle and affectionate nature, would fain retain him as a friend. Yes, friendship and love, were so much alike in her pure heart, that he had been led astray. But he remembered—and, as he did so, shuddered—the burst of uncontrollable emotion she had evinced, in thinking of the danger of him on whom she was about secretly to bestow her hand, and of the earnestness of her entreaties, that he would shelter him from the rage of her grandfather. This, too, it was, no doubt, which gave such fervour to her thanks; and, at the close of their interview, so much kindness to her expression and manner; while having, at its commencement, pronounced her refusal so distinctly, she could have no fear of being misunderstood.

Arrived at this comfortless conclusion, he had nothing for it, but to summon resolution to his aid, and, as he had said, manfully face his bitter disappointment.

Yet, those hopes, which were now to be resigned for ever, how delightfully had they been blended with the subjects and objects which, from childhood, had engrossed his whole being.

"How beautiful is her enthusiasm!" he thought, "yes, to her own purity it seems so simple that all others should be pure! To her own nobleness of nature, so easy for all others to be generous and just! And to her own kindness and gentleness, so natural for all the world to love one another, that her hopes of an immediate realisation, of all that benevolence desires, are, perhaps, more sparkling, more overflowing, than those which a greater knowledge of life will permit the experienced to entertain.

To have seen those bright anticipations,

beaming on the features of one beloved, as he had done, and trace their source to the angel purity of a heart by which he trusted he was loved, was indeed a felicity which it was not easy to forego!

But he must forget his own individual existence—his short dream of individual happiness, and devote himself to the great work of general usefulness. He must not permit that usefulness to be impaired, by giving way to comparatively selfish regrets.

But were his regrets altogether selfish! Was it only his own happiness which was at stake? Were there not just grounds to fear for that of Catherine also? The circumstances of the case—the concealment from her father, made it but fair to presume that all was not right; that the man who could induce a young person to make a clandestine engagement, was not likely to make a good husband, or to fulfil any relation in life well.

The love of such a man could be but selfishness in a very poor disguise.

Although so fully occupied in thought, his walk appeared to have some ulterior object; for he followed the course of the river, till he came to where a bye path climbed the bank abruptly, and ran across some fields. When taking this path, it led him towards a small thatched cottage, with a garden in front.

He perceived a gig standing at the little gate of the garden. He entered the gate, but before he could reach the cottage, was met by a gentleman, issuing from its porch.

Adrian looked in his face enquiringly. For reply, he shook his head.

"All is over then?" said Adrian.

"Oh yes!" replied the stranger, "I never had any hope. Things had gone too far before you found the poor people out. She had been doing well, at first, they tell me, but for want of proper nourishment, when the natural appetite came, she sank rapidly. She told me she used to lie thinking of food, but would not mention it,

because she knew her poor mother had nothing to give her."

"Could they not have sent up to the Wolderlands?" asked Adrian. "It is so near."

"I made that remark myself," answered Mr. Jinks the surgeon, "but it seems no people with demands of any kind, are permitted to pass the lodge gates. And from the extent of the property, most other places are at a considerable distance. It is not the hard *heartedness*, but the *tender heartedness* of the rich," he added with a smile, "which does the mischief. At least, I have observed in my practice; that when rich people are brought practically acquainted with the sufferings of the poor, they feel for them, and relieve them; but that many refuse to know, because they do not like to be at the trouble to feel!"

"Too true, I fear," replied Adrian entering the cottage, as Jinks drove off.

A very old woman, very thin, and pale,

and with very grey hair sat on a low stool in the chimney corner, holding an infant against her chest, with its face on her shoulder; while she rocked herself and it, from side to side, giving it the moans of her grief for a lullaby! Three other children sat on the ground eating together, out of one bowl, the gruel which had been prepared for their mother.

Adrian addressed some words of condolence to the poor old woman with that kindness of tone and manner which are so consoling to the afflicted.

"It's the funeral I'm thinking of now," she said. "It will be a sore grief to me to see her that bore cold and hunger, to keep off the parish while she lived, buried by it at last. But God's will be done! It's no time for pride now, and death lying there in the room beyond."

Adrian set her mind at rest respecting the funeral.

"God bless you for that!" she said. "We hadn't you when her poor husband

died three months ago, owing to a kick from a vicious horse of my Lord's in one of the carts, which was the beginning of our troubles. It was a hard pinch," she continued, "the living fasting to bury the dead."

"But Lord Wolderland," interrupted Adrian, "surely if he had been told that the poor man came by his death working for him, he would have assisted this widow?"

"If he had been told; perhaps he might," she replied. "But how was he to be told when the orders are that he is not to be troubled by the mention of complaints, or petitions of any sort! So how could he, if he had been ever so compassionate, pity the sorrows he knew nothing about? I don't blame his Lordship."

"How true!" thought Adrian, and his own theories recurred to him as they always did under similar circumstances, "it is acquaintance with the sufferings of our fellow creatures that we want. We have

sympathies that would make this world an earthly paradise, if habitually active; but our modes of education do not awaken them."

He then spoke to her considerately about the little helpless ones by whom she was surrounded.

He told her that he would have them placed in an infant school, where they would receive religious and moral training, and whence they would, at the proper age, pass into a school of industry, where they should be taught gardening, farming, and various trades. And also that he could give her a situation, in which she would have, in part, the charge of her own grand-children, together with that of other infants; provided she would follow the instructions she should receive on the subject.

The poor old woman's thankfulness may well be imagined. But it was now that her tears flowed freely. The conflicting claims of too many sorrows had hitherto

confused her, and kept her gazing round her with a wild dry eye.

After the relief of thus weeping for a time, she looked wistfully towards the door of the inner room, and said:

"That poor thing!—She didn't die, sir! —No! it was sorrow and hunger that *killed* her."

As Adrian retraced his steps along the river's bank, he experienced that soothing effect on his wounded feelings, which having been called upon to pity and to aid, is naturally calculated to produce.

He thought with a thankful spirit, of the almost unlimited power, which competence, education, and position, can bestow upon one human being, in ameliorating the condition of hundreds, thousands, nay millions of his fellow-men, if that one human being be willing so to use his powers.

CHAPTER XX.

THE dressing-bell had rang some time since.

The saloon was already lighted, and the fire as wide awake as a good rousing from the butler could make it. But as yet no sofa, chair, nor ottoman could boast an occupant; though each, with its array of downy cushions, stood prepared to tempt luxurious indolence.

At length a door opened, and Catherine entered.

She looked all round timidly. A slight shade of disappointment passed over her features—yet she seemed to breath more

freely, as she glided with a noiseless step along the deep, soft carpet, to where, within its draperied recess, beside its fragrant companion, stood her harp.

She took her seat. She ran her fingers once or twice along the strings. She desisted; hung one little hand listlessly over the shoulder of the instrument, and turning towards the flower-stand, began with the other to touch lightly, now a blossom, now a leaf, the taper fingers straying from exotic to exotic heedlessly, and without effecting the tasteful arrangements, which in general marked where that fair hand had been.

She was later than usual; yet he who generally was earlier than herself, still delayed his coming.

But why was she later than usual?

Because she had so very much wished to be earlier—and was so conscious of the intensity of the wish, and of why she so wished, and of what she hoped, and of who she expected to find—or to be found by—that

the beating of heart, each time she had placed her hand on the lock of her door, had sent her back again to look at her watch once more, and consider, tremblingly, whether she ought to go down quite so soon; whether even *he* might not think it showed too much impatience to renew their so critically interrupted conversation.

Had the vibration of the chords been heard? And was there magic in the sound? It would seem so; for scarcely had it died away, when the door opened again, and lo! the image which had been in the heart of the musician, when the chords were struck, appeared!

The immediate consequence of the apparition, was the fall of an orange blossom, which silently strewed the carpet at Catherine's feet, with its delicate white leaves, spreading delicious perfume around!

Adrian sent his first glance, as usual, towards the well-known grouping of harp and flower-stand, beneath the draperies of his favourite window; and perceived, not

without trepidation, that the spot was actually occupied, as he had so often wished to see it, by its own presiding spirit—dear, sweet, innocent Catherine—there she was, alone in her beauty.

He approached—he stood before her for some seconds, mastering his own emotions, and watching hers.

She was so perfectly certain that he was about to renew his passionate declaration of attachment, and entreat her to reply, that she dared not look up. But she blushed—and the blush grew deeper and deeper. And she trembled—and the tremor became visible.

He shuddered!

She so dreaded to hear him begin to speak, that she was ready to sink into the earth. Yet she so longed to hear him begin to speak, that her very breathing was suspended.

The silence around them was absolute.

Both heard the beating of their own hearts—or thought they did so.

Her tremor increased. Her extreme confusion became painful. He saw the pain, but was not sufficiently composed himself, to define its causes: and having made up his mind that he had been distinctly rejected, he ascribed this pitiable distress, to a dread on the part of Catherine, that he was about to press a suit, which she had told him was hopeless, and subject her to an ungenerous persecution, by complaining of the bitterness of his disappointment; and reproaching her, perhaps, with having rendered that disappointment more bitter, by former encouragement.

She might deserve such a chastisement; but he, at least, had no intention of inflicting it. To set her more at her ease, therefore, and prove to her that he was incapable of conduct so indelicate, as that of which she seemed to suspect him, he murmured something about not having

seen the papers of the day; and walking towards a table at some distance, seated himself immediately under a shaded reading-lamp, and took up the *Times*. This was a piece of unpoliteness, of which, under any other circumstances, he could not possibly have been guilty.

After all had been quite still for some seconds, Catherine ventured to look up.

It so happened, that there intervened between herself and the table to which Adrian had retired, a deep falling festoon, of the lace drapery.

Under shelter of this transparent bulwark, through which, veiled herself, she could see distinctly, she stole a glance in the direction of the supposed student.

He was not reading. One elbow rested on the table, the fore finger supporting the temple. The other hand hung over the arm of the chair, and held the evidently forgotten newspaper; while his eyes were raised in meditation.

The concentrated rays of the lamp, flung downward by the shade above, fell full on his faultless features, which, beaming with inspiration, seemed to return more than the light they borrowed.

The naturally regular beauty of Adrian's countenance, was so enchanced by the growth of mind, by the habitual action of all high and noble thoughts, by the daily consciousness of just intentions, and by the perpetual exercise of kindly and gentle sympathies, that it was impossible to behold him, without feeling that you were in the presence of a superior nature ; yet one that attracted, even more than it awed.

The feelings of the gentle being, who, screened herself from observation, gazed on that face, amounted almost to worship; while the knowledge that she was beloved, preserved her from the fear, that in yielding to such feelings, she was guilty of forwardness.

She could see his lips sometimes move slightly, as if he thought in words. She could even perceive the regular heaving of his bosom, as he breathed. Once she marked a longer and deeper respiration. But though the stillness was profound, the sigh—if it were one—was not audible: yet it waked an echo, and was answered behind the lace drapery, by a sigh as noiseless.

"The heart that moves within that noble breast," she thought, "that richest of earth's treasures, has been offered to me, and I must not accept it! Nay, is at this moment mine, and I dare not claim it!"

Her sight grew dim with tears, but still she tried to gaze, till, as bright drops gathered in the long, silken lashes, objects were indistinctly seen through the dazzling haze, spangled over, as with the dews of the morning.

At length the guests began to arrive,

and a rapid change came over the scene.

Catherine, quitting her retreat, was surrounded by officious friends; who, by smiles and inuendoes, showed their acquaintance with Lord Wolderland's arrangements, as every one called the projected union, between the two halves of the Wolderland estate.

Young ladies, in an under tone, addressed to her praises of her cousin, without exactly saying why. Elder ladies, with less reserve, wished her every happiness: while Adrian, having left his reading table, stood conversing with a group of men, at some distance.

When dinner was announced, however, he quietly approached Catherine, and offered her his arm in silence. He must show Miss Wentworth, he thought, that he was not so unreasonable, as to be offended at her choosing to prefer another.

She took the arm with a thrill of joy; though the feeling was checked, almost

immediately, by the same sad thoughts which had scared away her first dream of happiness. While a certain parchment deed, with her own signature at the bottom of the page, now seemed to spread itself out before her, on her very plate.

She would, however, have felt her promises quite as binding, had this deed never existed: even the sad necessity for giving those promises, would have sufficed, had the promises never been given. But still, the deed was the visible representative of chains, of which, though firmly resolved to wear them, she now felt the weight, more heavily than she had ever done before.

Thus occupied, her manner was odd and abstracted. When Adrian addressed her, she scarcely ventured to look up; yet, when he turned from her, and spoke to others, she would glance, by stealth, at his profile, and say to herself:—

"He loves me! Those lips said so this morning."

Adrian felt somewhat hurt, that she should, by what seemed to him distance of deportment, appear to persist in suspecting him of the indelicacy of wishing to be importunate; and he became more and more reserved.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT night, on retiring to his room, Adrian silenced the last murmur of his heart.

"No useless wishes, no idle regrets of mine," he thought, "shall renew the pain she has evidently suffered this day, or interrupt the friendly intercourse she still wishes to maintain.

As far as she would permit him, he would act, conscientiously, the part of a watchful brother towards her, but never betray a wish to renew his addresses.

In pursuance of these resolves, and supported by a pardonable share of proper

pride; but infinitely more by the pre-occupation of mind, belonging to the great objects of his life; he was enabled to maintain towards his cousin, even when alone with her, a kind and friendly behaviour, without so much as alluding by look or manner to his disappointment. She must perceive, he trusted, that he had no intention of being troublesome.

With respect to his promise, to shelter Catherine from the anger of her grandfather; he did not anticipate any difficulty. He should simply decline the honour of the proffered alliance—he was not obliged to assign his reasons.

He could have no scruples on the score of veracity, in saying that he declined the alliance; for were Miss Wentworth willing to waive the objection of her attachment to another, it was one which he could not look over—therefore, though he did very much wish that the circumstances had been different—he did not, under existing cir-

cumstances, wish to marry Miss Wentworth.

Being, however, his own master, and in no way amenable to Lord Wolderland, he was not obliged to explain the circumstances, which had thus decided him; and, therefore, should decline doing so. But he should delay all this, until Lord Wolderland himself should appoint an interview, according to his pompous habits.

It was not at all important to put an immediate end to any misconception which might exist, on the part either of Lord Wolderland or of strangers. There were no feelings at stake; on the contrary, it must be more agreeable to Miss Wentworth, while she could not declare her secret attachment, to find herself sheltered, by this supposed engagement to him, from the addresses of other admirers, as well as from all new projects of her grandfather's.

As to himself, it was perfectly indifferent to him, that all the world should believe him to be engaged.

He had even the courage to accompany her in her walks, as usual. But with feelings how widely different from those, which had rendered all former rambles over park, or wood, or field, delightful.

Catherine's quick susceptibilities of the beauties of nature, which used to captivate him so much, now pained him. When on former occasions, he had thought he could detect the presence of other, and more tender feelings, blending with, and vivyfying those susceptibilities, giving a thrilling pathos to the voice, in which a remark was made, or bringing to the cheek a deepening glow, uncalled for by the ostensible subject; each such symptom had been hailed as a fresh earnest of his felicity.

Now he knew, or thought he knew, the source of this fervent romance, which thus cast its beautifying tints over every object, and awakened every dormant sensibility, to be a secretly cherished attachment to another. He knew this, he believed, from her own lips, and could not, there-

fore, even hope that he might be mistaken. Yet, there were short moments, when those very symptoms would shake his self-command, enough—not to restore hope, indeed—but to renew pain.

To avoid the awkwardness of silence, when it chanced that he found himself alone with Catherine, he would speak on general subjects; while she would, on the contrary, become abstracted, and scarcely open her lips; for, on such occasions, she was totally absorbed by the one idea, that after his generous declaration of attachment, though she was so unhappily circumstanced, that she could not accept him; yet that she ought not to let him believe himself ungratefully refused. She felt how different the manner of that refusal would have been, had she not been induced to believe that he preferred Lady Emily Rosley; and that, in addressing her, he was making a sacrifice of inclination, to considerations of family aggrandizement.

How was she to explain this? She thought,

and thought again; but turn it which way she might she found it was impossible for her to introduce the subject herself; and she had forbidden him to allude to it: while even those that were connected with it, or that might lead to it, she dared not from intensity of consciousness approach—Yet she would pass all such in review, as though to see if there were one less objectionable than the rest; and blush, as she rejected each, as if in having even considered it she had already been guilty of a breach of delicacy. Yet no sooner were herself and Adrian joined by a third person, or their *tête-à-tête* otherwise terminated, than she began to condemn herself for having allowed the opportunity to pass.

When scenes of secret agitation like these had ended, and were succeeded by the feverish excitement of mixed society; Catherine would, by a spell-like fascination, in which the will had no part, become, without venturing a glance towards him,

conscious of every movement of Adrian's: envy the most casual of his smiles to any one he chanced to address; regret, if he but placed a chair for a standing guest, that she was already seated, and therefore had no chance of receiving such a mark of attention at his hands—Nay, when he stood with men, and talked politics; her state of feeling, (for she did not precisely *think* such absurdities), might have been rosolved into wishing herself a man, and a politician, that the precious words—whatever they were—which were being uttered by that dear voice, might have been addressed to her! She loved music 'tis true; but what was any other music to those tones; they came to her through all the medley of sounds, and echoed through her heart!

When all this again had passed away, and she sat alone in her chamber, what was her solace? To repeat each well-remembered word of Adrian's generous, and high-minded declaration of love, of which it

was at least permitted her to be proud—and grateful—It could not be wrong to be grateful!

At other times she would view all despondingly. She could not expect that he would continue to love her. He must resent the ungracious manner in which he had been rejected. She was conscious too, that she had not always been so ungracious —Might he not think that she had been guilty of coquetry—and perhaps she was to blame—perhaps she ought to have remembered sooner that she could not accept him. And would not all this work a change in time, and he would cease to love her; and, at last—Yes! he would not change quickly but—at last, he would love another!

Here she would fall into a reverie, in which funeral and wedding processions, hearses with black plumes, and carriages with white favours, would intermingle strangely.

And on arousing herself, she would find that she had been guilty of hoping—for

she knew it would be wrong to wish—that she might happen to die, before she should hear of Adrian's marriage with another!

Thus some weeks passed away: till, at length, the mute understanding that love was no more to be mentioned between the lovers, seemed to be fully established.

CHAPTER XXII.

At a very early hour, on a bright morning, Adrian was up and out.

He did not linger, as of late, in the flower garden—he did not even pass through either that or the conservatory; but issuing from the principal entrance, crossed the park, passed the porter's lodge, and following, for a short way, the high road, thence entered a shady, green lane, where the breath of the morning was made delicious by the multitude of wild flowers, which climbed the bank on either side, and entwining with the hedges, covered them with their blossoms.

After pursuing this lane for a time, he passed through a stile, crossed some fields, passed through another stile into another lane. And now an ivy-covered tower appeared above the trees, and at the next turning, he came in view of a modest country church, standing on a small abrupt eminence, and near it, below, the parsonage house. This latter stood in a pretty lawn, on which two cows and a calf were feeding.

Near the house was a neatly kept and well-stocked flower garden, railed off from the lawn by a slight wire fence. Every window had luxuriant, flowering shrubs trained round it; and those of the ground floor opened as glass doors on the gravel on two sides, and on closely mown grass, on the third; while the fourth, which looked on the poultry yard, dairy, and kitchen garden, was screened off by evergreens, mixed with taller trees.

The scene was animated by the figures of seven or eight rosy, chubby children,

boys and girls, wearing broad-brimmed, round straw hats; and with garden implements in hand, busily occupied raking, or weeding, or planting, or training, or watering, which latter occupation seemed to be the peculiar delight of two of the least of the party, with the biggest as their chief, who carried a large watering pot, while the two little ones ran beside him with tiny ones in their hands, begging him to fill them; this he good-naturedly did, from time to time, showing them how to sprinkle the water, till his own watering pot wanting replenishing, he repaired to a neat-painted pump, which stood a little aside, to fill it; but here the ambition of his young assistants was aroused, and both clamoured to be permitted to pump.

The elder boy gratified them in turn, allowing first one, then the other, to lay a little fat hand on the extremity of the handle, while, with his vigorous arm, he sent forth, to their infinite and triumphant delight,

a sparkling gush of the limpid stream from the mouth of the pump.

Adrian had arrived within a few yards of the group, and was standing looking on, with a pleased smile, for some moments, before he was perceived by any one, so busy were they all. At length he was descried, and a universal shout, a flinging down of spades, and rakes, and a simultaneous rush of the whole party towards him, made it as impossible to decide who had seen him first, as who was most glad to see him now. The sparkling eyes that looked delight, the cherub faces that were held up to be kissed, the little hands that twisted themselves, half a dozen together into each of his; and the innocent voices that vociferated his name, with all the variety of tones, and versions, induced by the respective ages of the parties; were enough to chase away sadness from the heart of a cynic. As Adrian's was anything but such, he looked absolutely happy, returning the greetings of all his little friends, and accepting, with

equal graciousness, innumerable offerings of flowers, held up to him on every side; from the prettiest rose out of a basket full, which the eldest little girl had been gathering; down to the daisy's head without a stalk; as eagerly presented with upstretched arms, by the youngest of the party.

"This is my pattern family, I always say," exclaimed Adrian, as he erected himself in the centre of the lovely group to return the salutation, and accept the welcoming hand of Mrs. Fairfield, the clergyman's wife who, on hearing the exclamations of her darlings, had issued from one of the glass doors, at once to welcome her most welcome guest, and witness, and sympathise with, the delight of her little ones: looking herself as blooming, as fresh, and as happy, as her own youngest child.

"I know you have no objection to breakfasting in the garden," she said, as soon as the numerous little voices who all had something to tell her, admitted of her being heard. She then led the way round some tall shrubs

on the shady side of which appeared, standing on the grassy carpet, a most comfortable looking breakfast-table; with a nice clean cloth, a bubbling urn, loaves and breakfast cakes, of all shapes and sizes, eggs, cold meat, &c.

"It is not the first social meal," rejoined Adrian, "I have enjoyed under the shade of these trees."

Mr. Fairfield now appeared coming round from behind the plantation which screened off the kitchen garden, in which he seemed to have been earning his breakfast; to judge from his healthy and happy appearance, as well as that of two of his elder sons, who followed him carrying baskets of fruit, which they laid on the table to the evident delight of the younger members of the group, whose eyes sparkled with well founded hope at the sight.

The Pastor's greeting of Adrian was cordial indeed: at once affectionate, and respectful; serious, and glad. It was not the respect of restraint, or convention; it

was the veneration of a mind which, noble, pure, and just in all its own feelings, and dealings, is capable of appreciating like qualities in others. Theirs was a friendship of many years. Their intercourse had been of a nature to make the character of each fully known to the other. The result was heartfelt respect, and love, on both sides; while, without perhaps precisely defining their own feelings, they were mutually grateful to each other for the high and rare pleasure, of being enabled to bestow on a fellow being unqualified approbation! A feeling so akin to the religious sentiment of veneration for infinite goodness; that it exalts our own nature, while it fills us with a placid joy, second only to that derived from the higher contemplation.

"I am come to spend a long, happy day with you," said Adrian; "I knew it would do me good. It has done me good already."

His friend looked at him. Their eyes met for a second, but Mr. Fairfield made no comment.

"You are not ill, I hope?" said Mrs. Fairfield.

"By no means," replied Adrian, "but the social atmosphere of the Wolderlands," he added evasively, yet truly, "is not refreshing; pompous dullness, forced gaiety, and oppressive luxury; whereas here—one breathes air from Paradise. A heart that were blighted would bloom afresh among so much unaffected happiness; knowing, too, which greatly enhances the sense of enjoyment in witnessing such a scene, that the right feelings of all, in their several relations, are the sources of that happiness.

He became silent, and looked on with a slight but kind smile, as Mrs. Fairfield distributed the store of fruit.

Under cover of the joyful commotion which this occasioned, he indulged in a short reverie.

He hoped he might not ultimately prove so weak as he at present felt himself to be; but he found it impossible to imagine, that his ideal of all that he could have so fondly

loved, could ever be realized by any other being. He could not help, therefore, fancying that all the delightful associations with which he had always, in imagination, surrounded the ties of family and of home, were, for him, for ever swept away."

This thought mixed a dreamy pensiveness with the healing joy he derived from witnessing the happiness before him. It was but natural at such a moment, to place a value on domestic ties.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Breakfast over, Mrs. Fairfield retired, followed by the young people. She had ten thousand things to do, or see done; but with the elasticity of a happy and a loving heart, she went to it all undaunted. She never looked out of humour, or even anxious; her face, on the contrary, seemed to reflect from that of every child, the light of all its little joys, till it became itself, a perfect galaxy of smiles!

However numerous her occupations, they never made her deaf to the lisped petitions of her two youngest children, who were for ever tottelling about at her feet. Nay,

it was this constant distribution of small sources of cheap happiness, which seemed to be her recreation, and prevent any employment less agreeable from fatiguing.

She had, indeed, the happiest manner with children—a fortunate knack of intercepting faults. If a child used an ungracious expression; she would treat its having done so, as a mistake, and suggest a better. Even the baby that had tried to push away, or beat another child; learnt from her judicious method of exciting its sympathies, rather than its temper, to caress, a moment after, the very cheek it had maltreated; or break and divide with its own tiny fingers, the cake it had been struggling to obtain entire; till, sometimes, the little creatures would grow quite fond of the new found delight of bestowing, and look about for something more to give.

The pious pastor used to say that a merciful God had provided an antidote for every moral, as well as every physical poison, in

an opposite sympathy, which only required to be awakened.

But the great blessing of Mrs. Fairfield's lot, and what made all her tasks delightful was that her husband loved her; and cordially approved of everything she did.

Their children had never heard them differ in opinion, so that the lessons of each came recommended by the authority of both. Nor had their children ever seen them wanting in kind and respectful behaviour towards each other. Naturally, therefore, the brothers and sisters, as soon as they could walk and speak, began to imitate this good example, and to have good and obliging manners towards each other, yielding their places, lending their toys, and begging pardon, quite gracefully, for differing in opinion; for you never heard, among them, the plump contradiction, rude speeches, bad compliments in jest, and noisy arguments about nothing, so common in too many well-meaning families, who would be shocked to think,

that they were making each other less happy than they might be, and who do so, merely because they have not been accustomed, in childhood, to use, or see used, good breeding at home, but fancied gracious manners, state day-things, to be brought out, and put away again, with their full dress habiliments.

Mr. Fairfield often said, that the precept, "Love as brethren! be compassionate! be courteous!" if thus practically carried out in every nursery, would soon make the world an earthly Paradise!

"For, the gentle affections," he would add, "can no more grow in an atmosphere of ungraciousness, than tropical plants can flourish at the poles!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE forms of the good Pastor and his visitor might be seen walking slowly backward and forward, under the shade of some high forest trees, which skirted the lawn.

Through an opening among these trees was visible in the distance, the little church, standing on its eminence, with its ivy-covered tower; and the white, thread-like path, climbing the green hill conspicuously, in the direction of the sacred edifice.

The two figures paused, for a moment, when they arrived where this pleasing picture came in view, framed by the meeting above of the lofty trees.

Mr. Fairfield pointed towards the path on the hill side, saying, with a playful smile—

"My parishioners cannot plead ignorance of the way in which they should go! The mute eloquence of that visible appeal," he added, more seriously, "has always seemed to me irresistible! And when the simple voice of the church bell, for we have nothing great in that way, comes wafted on the breeze, marking the appointed seasons for devotion; I do think, the very feet of my little family, would take them along that path, if it were possible that their wills could turn rebel."

On being left alone with his young friend, Mr. Fairfield had partly expected some confidential communication. For though Adrian smiled that day as kindly as ever when he spoke; and as indulgently as ever when he looked on at the sports of the children, there was something subdued in the light of his smile, which the discerning

eye of one who knew him so well had perceived. Finding, however, that the young man did not volunteer any disclosure, the elder friend was too delicate to ask questions, and the conversation turned on the prospects of the pastor's children.

"Mrs. Fairfield loves to repeat," he remarked, "that large families generally prosper; and I trust the saying may prove just, with respect to our young people. I think they are well disposed. And I hope we have brought them up in the bond of brotherly love; so that they will, I am sure, help one another through life, as far as they are able. However rough, therefore, the weather may prove, no storm can well arise likely to sink *all* their boats at the same moment!"

"They cannot but prosper!" said Adrian. "Every gentle sympathy, and noble aspiration, has been awakened by the kind and judicious treatment of yourself and Mrs. Fairfield."

"Frowns," rejoined the pastor, "blight young children, as frosty nights blight young plants! Well, I will say that much for my wife—No one ever saw her frown!"

"And the majority of your family being boys," continued Adrian, "I think I may promise to provide for them all—all the boys I mean—and that without making fighting men of any of them; knowing your horror of warfare to be as great as my own."

"When the weak need their aid against the wanton aggressions of the strong," rejoined the pastor, "may they ever be ready to grant that aid. But not one of them shall ever, with my consent, become professional slayers of men for hire; sworn to draw his sword on any human brother whom rulers may choose on a point of national etiquette, to designate 'the enemy!' If I can get a living for one boy; a curacy for another, and make school-masters of the rest, I shall be satisfied; for all will have opportunities of doing good."

"Well! I can undertake," replied Adrian, "that more than one of your sons shall have a living, and more than one other a curacy, and that all the rest shall have schools on the society's new plan; with glebes and stipends attached, at least as good as many livings. While, as to estimation; surely those who teach the child how to feel, and how to think, are labourers in the same field, dressers of the same vine, as those who preach, in a like spirit, to adults. Nay, is not the task of training the tender branch, not only more grateful; but also more important in its probable results than that of trying to bend the stubborn bough? Is not the field in which good seed has been sown, in the seed time, more likely to produce good grain in the harvest time; than that which, having lain fallow till that season, is then exhorted to be fruitful?"

"There can be no question," rejoined the pastor, "that the guidance of the mind, at that early age, when it is fresh from the

hand of its maker, ought to be considered, a sacred, and a noble profession: and that till this be universally acknowledged, human progress must be slow: for teaching cannot avail us, unless we respect our teachers!"

CHAPTER XXV.

ALONG the path at the river side once the favourite walk of the lovers. Catherine was now moving slowly and alone.

The non-appearance of Adrian at breakfast had made her uncomfortable. From time to time she looked involuntarily into the clear water; though why she did so it would be difficult to say: for she certainly did not think Adrian the kind of young man to hang or drown himself for love; at least if he had done so for the love of anybody else but herself, she would have considered it very foolish. It was evident

however, that her walk had some further object than looking into the river; for she now quitted its banks, took the path across the fields, and approached the poor old woman's cottage. It was not her first visit. She had been there both in company with Adrian, and alone, more than once before. She was now received by the good old woman, Mrs. Tomkins, and her grandchildren, as cordially, as was her lover some hours ago, by the family at the parsonage.

As soon as she was seated, the three children gathered round her, in a manner that more fastidious ladies would have hardly liked, and remained looking up at her with a fixed gaze; for her beauty, her kind expression, and her bonnet, altogether, possessed great attractions for young eyes, unaccustomed to aught but homely sights.

The point of attraction was however soon changed; for she opened her little basket on

her knee, and drew thence, first, two nice little caps for the baby, and a mourning one for Mrs. Tomkins, and then three thick pieces of ginger-bread for the three admirers who were watching her proceedings; and who, at sight of the last named treasure, could scarcely keep their joy within anything like decent bounds. They had seen nothing of the kind, since the best days of their father; who, when his vegetables sold well, used sometimes, to bring them home such pieces from the market.

The old woman was talking all the while; and never did conversation the most brilliant, lecture the most learned, poetry the most exquisite, or music the most melodious, give half the pleasure to mortal ear, that she was bestowing on Catherine, for her discourse was full of the praises of Adrian. How many particulars of his kindness and consideration, in her own instance, which, of course, he

had not mentioned himself, did she relate—how many other instances, of which Catherine had never heard among the neighbours.

The family that had got behind in their rent, in consequence of fever, whom he had saved from ejectment, and provided with seed, and paid for the first ploughing of the fields, because the man was not strong yet.

And the grocer's poor widow, down in the village, that was going to have had all the things she possessed sold, for the expenses of the funeral, that he had helped, and then ordered her in a stock of the *primest goods*—and got her shop-window painted, and the step of the door mended, where the water used to lie, and keep the neighbours from going in of a dark, wet night, to buy a candle.

And the poor young man that they were going to send to prison, for poaching, that he got off, and had put apprentice to a

farmer; it having been proved that the lad had got into bad company, entirely for want of work.

And the number of idle, neglected, poor children, who did nothing but rob orchards, or practice swearing and gambling over their marbles; that he took from the street, and got to good Mr. Fairfield's industrial school, where they were taught, not merely to read and write, but also, for half the day, were employed in learning how to earn honest bread, and what's more, to like it the better for being honestly gotten.

Before Catherine departed, she told Mrs. Tomkins, that she must send every day to the lodge-gate of the Wolderlands, for as much thick, good soup, with plenty of pieces of meat and bread, and nice vegetables in it, as she and her three grandchildren could eat."

Seeing the good woman's look of surprise, she added, with a smile,

"We have got grandpapa's permission, so do not be afraid to come. The first day, they will give you the soup in a pewter vessel, that covers very closely, and keeps it hot, after which, you must every day bring back the vessel to be filled again."

CHAPTER XXVI.

How the miraculous conversion of Lord Wolderland to the soup-kitchen faith was wrought, it is necessary here to state, lest the fact itself should be doubted.

Catherine, on hearing the story of Mrs. Tomkins's daughter, thought it possible she might do some good by speaking to the housekeeper, who had evinced a great desire to get into her good graces.

Accordingly, she paid Mrs. Mobrey, such was the name of that authority—a visit in the housekeeper's room, there to consult with her on the subject; with which mark of condescension, that lady was so much

delighted, that she was fully prepared to do anything her young lady, and probably future mistress could desire.

On Catherine explaining the object of her visit, Mrs. Mobrey declared, that the waste committedat the Wolderlands had gone between her and her rest for years. That she had frequently spoken to the cook on the subject, but that functionary could devise no remedy, as his Lordship would not allow poor people to pass the lodge, and as the servants were all much too idle, to carry the broken meat to the poor people's houses

Catherine suggested, that if Lord Wolderland would permit the people to come to the lodge gate, the woman at the lodge might be employed to prepare and give out the food. Mrs. Mobrey, therefore, undertook to obtain the consent of Lord Wolderland, and she managed the affair well, for she understood the ostentatious character of her employer, a weak point she had often turned to account, in for-

warding her own special purposes. The Duke of Ravensdale's housekeeper, she would say, possessed such and such privileges; his Lordship, of course, would not choose anything in his establishment to fall short of his Grace's.

Or, the Duke of Ravensdale's housekeeper did *not* possess such privileges; but then, everything was done on a handsomer scale at the Wolderlands, than at his Grace's.

In short, Mrs. Mobrey had long played on this one chord of Lord Wolderland's soul, with as much execution as Paganini, on the one string of his violin.

It happened, that some of the Duke's servants had said, within the last few days, that a soup kitchen was about to be established at Ravensdale, as soon as the Duke returned home.

Mrs. Mobrey mentioned this important discovery to her lord and master, observing, that she considered it her duty to do so, feeling confident that his Lordship

would choose to take the lead of his Grace in such a matter.

His Lordship was reclining, as usual, in his throne-like arm-chair. He contemplated himself in the opposite mirror, with less reserve than he might have deemed necessary in more elevated society, and adjusting his head under the coronet on the back of his chair, said, in a voice not ungracious for him:

"Have you thought how the thing can best be done, Mrs. Mobrey?"

The cunning housekeeper had noticed the manœuvering before the glass; so, affecting hesitation and confusion, she replied that she always felt as if in the presence of majesty, when speaking to his Lordship.

She then proceeded to suggest the employment of the people at the lodge—and communicate certain facilities, afforded by the existence of a disused wash-house adjoining the lodge, and having a door opening on the high road; adding, that a

concourse of persons, daily waiting outside for his Lordship's bounty, was a thing which, in her humble opinion, would be quite suitable to the well-known munificence and liberality of his Lordship, and could scarcely be overlooked by the county newspaper, that was so fond of talking of the benevolence of his Grace.

This last cadence on the single-stringed instrument, decided the fate of the broken meat, and of the hungry mouths that waited for it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was evening. The sounds of music, the hum of voices, the blaze of lights filled the great saloon as usual. Dancing was going on, and the lovers were dancing together. Both endeavoured, though perhaps unconscious of design in so doing, to touch the hand of the other as lightly as possible, when the evolutions of the dance demanded this ceremony; for the emotion caused by such casual contact instead of being, as formerly, a thrill of exquisite pleasure, was now a sort of electric shock accompanied by a sense of panic, and leaving a sense of pain!

The quadrille over, they did not walk apart, or sit apart; as partners often do. Neither did they seem as much attracted by the perfume of exotics as formerly. Yet the flower-stand, and the harp, stood as temptingly as ever in the deep recess of the distant window; and over the entrance of this retreat the heavy damask satin draperies fell as richly, and the light lace draperies crossed beneath them as gracefully as they had ever done. The objects were all pleasing in themselves, yet Adrian could not catch even an accidental glimpse of that portion of the room without a feeling of deep melancholy. The shades of all the hopeful, happy moments, of which it looked to him like the decorated tomb, seemed to haunt the spot.

He led Miss Wentworth to a seat; refrained from taking one beside her—stood before her for a moment or two—made some casual remark; and, a moment after, with a sort of leave-taking bow, observed:

"I see Lord Wolderland is looking at

the society's prospectus," and walked towards the sofa at the upper end of the room on which his Lordship was seated with the Duke of Ravensdale, both examining, and apparently discussing a printed circular.

Catherine looked after the receding form of her partner without being aware of her imprudence.

Miss Joslin, of worsted work celebrity, following the direction of her eyes, whispered her:

"Oh, you happy girl! How graceful he is!" she added, "and in what a proud way he walks!"

"Proud!" repeated Catherine. "Oh, he is not proud at all!"

"I don't mean disagreeably so," rejoined Miss Joslin. "But I am sure if any one has a right to be proud he has—And you still more so—To think, that a man who looks as if he were at the head of empires; should have been at your feet! If it were

me, I should go distracted with joy! How can you sit still, and look grave, you sly creature? And the Duke told papa, that he was sure he would be Prime Minister! Only think!—to be the wife of the Premier! Does he make an ardent lover!" she added, lowering her whisper very much. "Do tell me! And does he manage to be humble; and beg—and pray—and say his fate is in your hands? Oh, how curious it must be!"

Tears stood in Catherine's eyes; but she only pressed the thoughtless girl's hand in silence.

"How I should like," ran on Miss Joslin, "to have a lover that was famous! and that made fine speeches in the House of Commons! And to think that a man, to whom Nations listened when he spoke, should hang on a whisper of mine, for his happiness! Is it not quite intoxicating? I vow, I never will listen to a lover, who is not a great orator, and a great politician!

The thought makes everything else insipid!"

While this aside speech was passing, many graver authorities were admiring the circumspection of the lovers. It was pretty universally agreed, that they did quite right, not to make themselves conspicuous, in society. Lady Montville, indeed, pressed her lips together, and looked wise; and Lady Emily smiled, and looked down.

Adrian placed a chair, near the sofa he had approached, and joined in the discussion which was going on, respecting the prospectus.

"Then your Grace considers, farms, gardens, and ranges of workshops, indispensable adjuncts to these schools?" demanded Lord Wolderland.

"As indispensable, as habits of industry, and a knowledge of the means of gaining honest bread, to the class for which the schools are intended," replied his Grace.

"And so thoroughly has your lordship's young relative here, convinced me of this, that I shall make a point of immediately adding farms, gardens, and workshops, to all the schools on my property; and also furnishing each, with a suitable residence, having ground and garden attached, like a rector's glebe, for the use of the master."

"The Wolderland school house, is a handsome building?" observed his lordship pompously.

The duke assented.

"And as to those additions," continued Lord Wolderland, "they can be made, I suppose? People can be found, no doubt, to arrange all that, without my being troubled with details?"

"If I can be useful," said Adrian, who had the reform of the Wolderland school much at heart, "my services are quite at your lordship's command. I make only one condition: the power of appointing an efficient master."

His lordship thanked him; accepted his condition; and added,

"With respect to expense, you know I never do things on a contemptible scale: Let everything, therefore, which you have the goodness to arrange for me Mr. Wentworth, be done with becoming munificence."

This was a great point gained: for the Wolderland school was one of the worst managed in the kingdom. Its only playground, the street of the village. Its master, a man appointed by Snooks, as a reward for active services in breaking heads at a contested election; and whose modes of persuasion with his pupils, being of the same description, a public opinion had arisen among the boys, in favour of deception, when it could be practised successfully; rebellion, when that failed; and finally, when there was nothing else for it, heroic endurance, of the brutal, and brutalizing punishments, of their common enemy,

the master. Add to this, that their was neither moral nor industrial training, the mere instruments of knowledge being all which the school pretended to teach.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A note was handed to Adrian, at breakfast, in consequence of which, as soon as the meal was over, he repaired to the Rectory.

After the usual cordial greetings had passed, he walked a little apart with his old friend the pastor, who, as soon as they were far enough removed from the joyous laughter of the children, to afford him a fair chance of being heard, said:

"I will not apologize for asking you to accompany me to Mrs. Moss. If I understand her case aright, I think you can render her a great service; and I know that when I

procure for you an opportunity of doing good, that you consider yourself the obliged party. As we go along, I will give you some idea how matters stand. This is our shortest road," he added, leading the way round the plantation which concealed the kitchen-garden, along its centre walk, and through a small gate at the bottom of the garden, into a green lane; where, still discussing as they went, the case of Mrs. Moss, they proceeded between higher hedgerows till they came to a flight of stone steps, fixed in the side of the steep bank, and having a little gate at the top. Passing through this, they emerged on a long, narrow lawn, having a pretty ornamental cottage at one end, a screen of planting all round, lined with flowering shrubs, and bordered with beds of flowers; while standard rose trees, and rustic chairs, dotted the smooth grass of the lawn, and flowering creepers twined over the porch, and windows of the cottage. The latter too, being all partly open, and the door entirely so,

showed glimpse of tasteful furniture within.

At first there were young voices in the air, but they ceased on the appearance of the two gentlemen.

The figure of a little girl in a black frock, flitted into the cottage; and that of a boy, not above three years old, also in black, glided behind some shrubs, and peeped round a Portugal laurel at Mr. Fairfield, with a half-alarmed face, that seemed to say, I would run over to you, if you had not that stranger with you.

In a moment or two, a maid servant in black, came from the door, and invited the gentlemen to walk in.

They did so, and were ushered through the hall—in which sat two suspicious looking men—into a front room, and from that into a back one, where, at a table covered with bundles of papers, and, lawyer like, long shaped letters, sat a lady, in weeds, very pale, with mild and interesting features.

She half rose to receive the gentlemen.

The pastor accosted her with kind familiarity of manner, and then presented his friend.

She tried to make some courteous acknowledgment, but her voice failed her, and after a struggle with her feelings, she was obliged to cover her face with both hands, and sob without disguise.

The little girl, who had been crouching on a low footstool, almost behind the mourner's chair, and concealed by the folds of her dress, now rose, noiselessly, and twined her arms round her mother's neck, murmuring,

"Don't, mama! don't cry!"

Both gentlemen tried to speak some words of comfort, and the mourner becoming less agitated, the child sank again on her low seat, only retaining fast one of her mother's hands.

Mrs. Moss making another effort to speak, though in broken accents, addressed Adrian, saying—

"Mr. Fairfield tells me, sir, that you never think helping the afflicted a trouble!"

"Is it not a privilege?" he asked, in a mild, modest tone; "and would it not be a pleasure, but for the suffering witnessed?"

"My dear madam!" interposed the good pastor, with honest warmth, "those who are but called upon to sooth the affliction of others, is not their portion of the burden of human woe, sufficiently light to carry? should they not be ashamed, indeed, if they could call that easy duty by the name of trouble! And believe me, my dear young friend here, is the last man on earth, so to pervert language, or smother the holy instinct to which, that comprehensive command, "do unto others others as ye would they should unto you!" is addressed.

"This good seed, the Almighty hand has sown in all our hearts, but the thorns and thistles of a worldly life, grow up around,

and choke it; else we should all bear each other's burdens cheerfully."

She shook her head in a mournful manner, as if she would have said—

"How few there are who do!"

To which mute appeal, the good pastor replied, by adding—

"Do not, my dear madam, in the hour of trial, lose your faith in goodness! The seed, as I have said, has been sown in every heart; but we do not water it, we do not tend it.

"You, my dear madam, are a mother: turn then these bitter lessons to a good account; and teach your children to listen within, during that bright and quiet hour of life's morning, before the passions are awake; and learn, by their own experience, how sweet the voice of God is, when he whispers in the young heart, and bids it do good; and how pure the joy with which he fills that heart, when it has prompted us to do his bidding. And in after life

when false ambitions and low propensities come clamouring on, drowning with their noisy importunities, the still small voice within, this holy remembrance shall arise and silence them."

Mrs. Moss was bending over her little girl, stroking her forehead with her hand, and bedewing it with her tears; but in a manner which seemed at once to mark attention, and tacitly promise compliance.

When silence had prevailed for some seconds, she looked up timidly at Adrian, and said:

"Mr. Fairfield tells me, that an interest in us, manifested by you, may have the best effect; for that this bad man will not dare to expose his villany in your eyes. Indeed, the utter ruin with which he threatens us, is altogether unaccountable—for—when—"

Here her lip trembled again, and she was obliged to desist.

The little girl's anxious eyes came round

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the folds of the dress, and looked up at her.

Adrian, easily guessing what was the melancholy epoch to which she found it so difficult to allude, hastened to request, that she would spare herself the pain of attempting any explanation at present, as Mr. Fairfield had already put him in possession of all the prominent facts of the case; and that he had, in consequence, waited upon her purposely, to assure her that she had nothing to fear; and that he would most willingly become her trustee, and consider the affair his own business, until he had brought it to a favourable conclusion.

"But if the conclusion should be unfavourable?" she said, with a look of mysterious terror: "for he tells me that new papers have come to light, which will reverse the decree."

"We must hope that things are not so bad as that," interrupted Adrian.

"And that," she continued, "if I do

not accept the miserable compromise offered, I shall have to take my helpless children by the hand, and go forth with them to beg."

"That, at least, can be prevented," eagerly interposed Adrian; "there are many honourable means of securing a home to yourself and your children, which your friend Mr. Fairfield and myself can arrange, if necessary, without taxing your spirits too severely for the present."

After a look of thankfulness, more expressive than words, she proceeded: "Everything here will be sold immediately, if I do not, as a first step, pay his bill of costs; which, on account of his exorbitant injustice was refused to be discharged by—" again she was obliged to break off; she could not name the husband she had so recently lost.

"Pray do not allow the bill of costs to cause you a moment's uneasiness," again interrupted Adrian; "I will dispose of that. He shall not receive one farthing more than his just due; and whatever he can claim, shall be met without troubling you; till

the affairs can be arranged, your home, rest assured, shall not be interfered with."

"But he has people in the house at this moment, empowered to seize everything!" said Mrs. Moss.

"Do not let that disturb you," he replied, "I will send them away."

"It does seem strange," she recommenced, "for the suit had concluded—and in our favour—" she paused, and then with an effort added, "my only hope is, that he has invented this new pretext, presuming on my present helplessness."

She took a letter from the table and gave it to Mr. Fairfield, who, having read it with disgust on his lip, and indignation on his brow, handed it to Adrian, saying:

"This language will not bear reading aloud. To think of a fellow attacking a widow within the first few days of her widowhood, and using expressions such as these."

Adrian ran his eye over the contents, and an unusual sternness marked his fine features; he then said gravely:

"This letter must be taken care of: it will transport him. The law does not permit threatening letters; and, under the circumstances, will view them with twofold severity. I have better hopes now, however, for this shows him to be a thorough villain! and renders it highly probable, that the whole affair is a trick. If so, 'tis one which calls for the utmost rigour. Mercy to such offenders becomes cruelty to the weak, for it exposes them to boundless brutality and to robbery, bounded only by what they have to lose."

This had been addressed to Mr. Fairfield. He then turned to Mrs. Moss; with a countenance from which all traces of displeasure having disappeared, soothing gentleness and benevolent intentions beamed, as he added:

"Trust to me, dear madam, everything shall be done promptly and decidedly, to place your affairs on a proper footing."

"But what claim have I on you," she said, looking up in his face with streaming

eyes, "that you should take so much trouble for me, a stranger?"

"Can you ask that question seriously?" he exclaimed.

The sudden conviction of his noble nature, seemed to strike her with such force, that she looked down, as if abashed at having doubted it, and a faint flush passing over her pale features, she murmured:

"I have not done you justice."

Her eyes fell on the uplifted ones of her little boy, who had now joined his watchful sister at her feet, whither he had crept, unperceived, during the scene just described.

Adrian looked on the group and firmly resolved that villany should not make this helpless family its prey!

The reflections originating in this case, were the cause; first, of the formation of a society, entitled, "The Widow's and Orphan's Friend;" the funds of which, were devoted to carrying through the law cases, of all Widows and Orphans, who could not

afford to defend their own rights. And, ultimately, of great, and beneficial reforms in the law, carried through parliament by the influence of Adrian's talents and position.

CHAPTER XIX.

In a dirty narrow street, in the country town of —— stood a rather large stone house. It was dismal looking, with unpainted wood-work, and uncleaned windows: while long streaks on the stone-work, marked where broken pipes had shed sooty tears, down its dirty face.

In short, it looked as if it had been in chancery for many years, and was lamenting its hard fate, as all so situated, they say, have cause to do.

On either side of the door were two windows, but they were barred at the top, like those of a prison. There were also

very high iron rails in front of them, about four feet distant from the windows, and four yew trees, one exactly opposite to each window, standing on a narrow strip of damp, black earth, enclosed within the rails, and which was of too cold and unwholesome a quality, for even a weed to exist upon.

The passage on which the entrance door opened, ran straight through the house, into what was complimented by the name of the garden. It was a small, square patch of gravel, with one yew tree in the centre, and surrounded with high walls, and a narrow border of the same description of damp, black earth, already noticed, on which appeared, at regular distances, the stalks of what had once been wall-flowers, but rotted near the root by the damp, and now lying quite dead, without so much as one living plant to watch by them. The only green thing was some mossy slime, or slimy moss, which covered a portion of the gravel: for the yew tree

could not be said to confer verdure on the spot, seeing that the hue of its ragged ramifications was black.

It was but fair, however, to conclude, that it was a useful yew tree, notwithstanding; for it wore sundry cords round its waist, which radiated towards certain hooks in the walls, evidently intended for drying clothes.

Birds disdained the spot; so there was not a chirp to be heard, or a hop from branch to branch to be seen. Indeed, the only perceptible signs of locomotive animation, were the rather quick evolutions of the nose of a rat, which peeped out, from time to time, from a drain that proceeded from the back of the house; supplying the garden with odoriferous gales, and an ebony stream, which, though it had never sparkled in the rays of sun or moon, had not the spirit to murmur, but went on, silently, from year to year, oozing out from the square, black hole, at the bottom of the house wall, which was its source. And

it may be necessary, for the sake of perfect veracity to add, that when there was much wind, the ends of the cords which were fastened round the hooks, swung a little; and the outer shutter of a pantry window, sometimes flapped; but this, though motion, was not life.

An unhappy cur dog, however, who was confined in an adjoining stable, did not imitate the patience of the ebon stream, for he never stopped whining, but to yelp, or yelping, but to break into a long and dismal howl, and from that, subside again, into its primeval whinings!

It was enough to wear out the patience of a saint! Yet, it did not disturb that of the owner of this paradise—though he was a saint—so much accustomed was he to the sound. Indeed, it is not impossible that, as a type of mortification of the flesh —though but dog flesh—still flesh, and *not his own!* the sounds of complaint might have been grateful to his pious feelings.

Be that as it may, it is time to penetrate to the inside of the dwelling.

The two windows on the left, as you entered from the street, were those of the kitchen, from the door of which, opening into the passage, issued the smell of soap suds, rather than savoury dishes. The two windows on the right, with the door on the right of the passage belonged to the parlour: and a dingy parlour it was! What with the yew trees, and the high rails, and the iron bars, the windows were calculated to give but little light; and that little was further obscured, by dust, and dirt, and cobwebs, which latter impediments, were inhabited by spiders, who had been so long in undisturbed possession, that if interfered with now, they might have pleaded the statute.

They had become as corpulent as aldermen, and had, in many instances, had the presumption to stretch their long lines, and netted snares, over nearly the whole of the panes they occupied.

Indeed, these overgrown spinning establishments were about as complete as such impunity could make them, having each a large porch, leading to the private apartments of the master, and situated in the extreme corner, with nurseries on either side, consisting of round, yellow coloured bags, containing millions of eggs well secured to the wood-work; and a convenient larder, hung with numerous whole carcases of dead flies, as well as sundry good joints; such as loose wings, legs, and heads. While such was the refinement in self-indulgence, practised by the over-fed masters of these establishments, that some of the apparently dead flies were only bound wing and foot with cords; and in that condition hung up in the larder, that the master might enjoy the luxury of killing his own meat, and sucking the fresh blood himself; being entertained during his meal by the musical humming of his victim.

Powerful chiefs, and rich nobles, time

out of mind, have kept performers to regale them with pleasant music during their repasts; but how it came, that the saintly owner of this mansion reconciled it to his conscience to permit such unseemly revelry under his roof it would be difficult to say; except it was, that he utterly despised the "filthy rags of righteousness;" and was comfortably certain of his own salvation having had a distinct call. Yet—pious man—he had his troubles; for his conscience was not quite so elastic, where his neighbours were concerned; and, therefore, certain as he was of his own salvation; he was equally certain, that Mr. & Mrs. Fairfield would be burnt in hell fire to all eternity, for the enormous crime of allowing their children to learn dancing! and, of course, the conviction must have pained his benevolence.

The aldermen spiders, encroaching though they were, had not the dingy parlour all to themselves. It had two other occupants, namely, Saint Snooks himself, a bloated,

elderly man, very like a toad; with a swarthy complexion, and clumsy, shapeless features; and his son, an unhealthy-looking, long, lanky, colourless lad; like the untimely shoot of an imprudent potatoe, which had begun to grow in the cellar without waiting to be planted. This unpromising sprout was seated on a high stool at a desk, apparently writing; for there was a scratching noise going on in his vicinity.

While the bloated father crammed with his yielding bulk the tight embraces of a greasy, leathern arm-chair; which stood beside a bureau table, covered with morocco, which had once been green, but which was now spotted with ink and candle grease, wherever the heaps of dust, letters, and bundles of papers tied with faded red tape, left it visible.

Reigning paramount over all this confusion, there stood, close to the elbow of the saint, a tin box. The lid being thrown

back showed that its contents were parchments.

And to judge by the attention which the saint was bestowing on the said parchments, as from time to time he selected, unfolded, examined, refolded, and replaced them in the box, one after another; there is good reason to believe, that this tin receptacle contained the documents of most importance to the business of the day.

At length the person thus employed, saluted one of these papers with a sort of familiar nod, accompanied by a friendly grunt, spread it out before him on the table, appeared to peruse portions of it with care, laid his spectacle case on a particular spot, and then, drawing out his watch, and addressing his companion while looking at it, said:

"You're sure he mentioned one?"

"Quite sure," replied the lad, in a rude and surly tone; meant to show that people had no business to doubt *his* accuracy.

The father, for such was the relationship of the questioner to the questioned, began pattering with his fingers on the parchment, first slowly, then quicker and quicker, as his impatience increased; when, just as he was drawing out his watch again, the stillness was disturbed by the uproarious remonstrances of a bottle-fly, who, having been seized by a spider, as bulky as himself, was struggling fearfully, but in vain, in the fangs of his foe.

Snooks glanced upward, at the corner of the pane in which the murder was taking place, and contemplated the scene, with an air of grim satisfaction, till the struggles of the victim, gradually becoming feebler, and finally ceasing, the silence of death succeeded to the tumult of loud complaint, and it became evident that the poor little fly was no more.

Yet how lately had he been walking soberly along the bottom of the pane, in perfect safety, if he had not, unluckily,

made that one unwieldy gambol upwards, by which his feet got entangled.

"And served you right," muttered St. Snooks, as he watched the completion of the tragedy. "What business had you to dance a hornpipe?"

The lad looked round and grinned, as he thought of the tavern balls he frequented, when the saint was gone to bed, and of the refreshments and amusements with which he regaled himself, at the expense of his father, and of his own health, during the remainder of the night.

"Industrious bee, indeed!" continued Snooks, in an accent of contempt; "industrious fool!"

"Not the only fool, neither" thought the lad.

"That gathers his honey," proceeded the father, "little by little, but to let others rob him of it by wholesale. Give me the wily spider—sharp practice his! Cunning to weave his web! Patient to lie

in wait, and quick to seize his prey! And when he has it, sucks it dry! Eh, boy? as dry as we suck a bankrupt's estate! Eh?"

"Or a widow's!" rejoined the son, in a sarcastic tone. Without this time taking the trouble to look round; for he seemed, to judge by his demeanour, as if he had a sovereign contempt for his father.

"Yes, yes, you wag!" retorted St. Snooks, with an approving chuckle. "Moss died just in the nick of time! Dry enough that estate shall be sucked, before we drop it—I promise you."

"It's just like you!" retorted the lad. "Widows and orphans, and bankrupts, are all you've the spunk to touch! It's very well to include them, for it matters nothing where the money comes from, so we get it. But when I set up for myself, I'll have at the men as well, and worm into whole estates —mind if I don't—old sneak!"

"I hope it may prosper with you under Providence," replied the saint,

solemnly. "Don't pull an old house over your head, that's all! The day's getting on though," he added, looking at his watch, which had been hanging over his forefinger, since his attention had been arrested by the bottle-fly. "You're sure it wasn't two he said?"

"What should I say one for, if he'd said two?" rejoined the lad, angrily.

"That's more than I can tell," said the father.

"Or I either. There's nothing to be got by such lies," retorted the hopeful son, "or I don't mean to say that I'd scruple a score of them."

"But to me, Jacob! There's no use in telling me lies, you know."

"No use to you, I dare say; but it's of great use to me sometimes, I can tell you!"

"And you say this to my face?"

"Aye, old boy, and to your back too!"

"I must look sharp, it seems!"

"As sharp as you like, I'll look sharper!" rejoined the lad, with a triumphant wink, and his tongue in his cheek. "I havn't been at it all these years, without learning the convenience of it for my own use."

"You don't mean to say, you young dog, that you've been at it longer than I have?"

"Why—I suppose not—perhaps you did not begin young?"

"Didn't I! No man has had a word of truth out of me since I was two years and a half old! I'll answer for that!"

"You're getting dull then, old boy! going back to second childhood, perhaps, or, maybe, you never had it in you. But, at all events, you're no match for me now," he added, in full grin, having worked himself into good humour, by this review of his own abilities, of which he was exceedingly conceited, having, scores of times, heard his father telling confidential friends what a

clever lad he was; by which, of course, he understood him to mean, how well he lied and cheated, never having heard his father call anything else cleverness.

Snooks grinned also, and rejoined:

"Well, you *are* a sharp lad, there's no denying that! It will serve your turn yet, I hope, when I am dead and gone," he added, pathetically. "And if you do get a little more out of me than I reckoned upon, in the meantime, 'twill prove a whetter, I trust, and give you a relish for sharp practice: eh, boy? All things are ordered for the best! There's nothing like tasting the sweets of a thing one's self, to make one take to it. The swell-mob, when they're training young children to the trade, make them begin with the gingerbread and apple-stalls, and allow them to eat all they can get off with! I have been in the courts myself when this has been proved, in the cases of juvenile offenders."

Snooks was too great a fool—as all

rogues are—to feel how thoroughly he was exposing himself.

"So you want to bring me to the gallows?" said the son.

"On the contrary; ain't I showing you how best to escape it!"

"Aye! aye! if I have wit enough; but, at all events, to go in the way of it! But, luckily, I've a head of my own on my shoulders, that's worth two of yours, any day. And many's the forbidden sweet I taste that your money buys, old boy, and that you know nothing about."

"As how pray?"

"That would be telling! I'm not going to show my cards; and spoil my game! And as for dying, you had much better live while there's any work in you; and see if you can't get enough to make a gentleman of me before you go. I know what sort of driving I should like better than quill driving! And what's more, I can't see the sense of all your doing; if I

am to go on, slaving here among the cob-webs, after you are dead!"

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Snooks, starting up, and looking eagerly at a gig, which having passed the dim window, was stopping before the entrance.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE door of the dingy parlour opened, and the expected guest came bustling in. He too was corpulent, swarthy, and putty featured, but neither nearly so old, nor nearly so bloated as his host, neither was the expression of his face nearly so revolting. He carried a bundle of papers under his arm.

"How do you do, Mr. Snooks?" he commenced. "'Fraid I've made you wait."

"How do you do, Mr. Higgins? You are not quite punctual, to be sure; but glad to see you've brought the papers."

"Yes, yes, here they are. And the sharp lad, how is he? sharp as ever, eh?"

"Sharper, or his father blunter; we have just been discussing which."

Both sharks, were by this time seated at the table.

Snooks pushed the papers which he had prepared before Higgins; and taking those which the latter had brought, spread them open before himself. Then, after examining various clauses, with nods of approbation; and saying,

"They'll do!" he added, emphatically.

"I have never found that there was any good to be done, till the attorneys, on both sides, had compared their papers, and come to a clear understanding between each other. For we are the parties after all! What can it signify to the clients which of them has the bone, when it is clean picked?"

"Doubtless," rejoined Higgins, "the ownership of either client, in a contested estate; is merely one of those convenient fictions of the law, which answers the purpurpose of rendering any other property they may possess, liable for the costs of conveying the one at issue to the lawyers."

"I was sure these old documents would do, to frighten the widow with!" pursued Snooks; who considered the axiom of his brother shark, too self-evident to require his assent. "They have never been brought forward before, I think?"

"No," replied Higgins, "we set them aside from the first, as useless, you remember. They are quite irrelevant to the case."

"Well, and they'd been useless still," said Snooks, "if Moss had been living. He was a fellow that would have read them, ye see. But, bless you! she'll know no better! She'll never look at them—or if she did, she couldn't understand them! Pretty lawyers they'd be, to draw up papers that women could understand.

"That lad there," pointing to the potatoe sprout on the high stool, "would draw you up a deed already, that you'll get few men to understand, much less a woman."

"If they should frighten her into a com-

promise," said Higgins, nodding towards the deeds before Snooks, "they will answer our purpose very well; but should she hold out, they will be what they have always been, waste paper! Nothing can reverse the decree! You saw the remark I put in pencil on the back, in case of not finding you at home?"

"Of course, this old rubbish won't reverse the decree!" rejoined Snooks, giving the deeds a contemptuous push. "And she may hold out—obstinacy does sometimes serve the women in place of sense, when a little firmness is required. But, even if she should refuse the compromise, the production of new papers will serve as a pretext for prolonging the suit, as long as you and I understand one another."

"That is to say, as long as there are any assets to divide," rejoined Higgins, "but, if she should hold out to the end, she must have the estate at last, however

closely shaven; for nothing can, as I have said, reverse that decree."

"We don't want to reverse the decree, man," retorted Snooks. "What better should we be, for giving the estate to your client, any more than to mine? All we want is, that the case should not fall to pieces, while there is anything to be got out of it for ourselves. But, bless you! the widow won't hold out long, I should say. Why, I have bailiffs in the house now, for the bill of costs—not that it's at all connected with the compromise, but women are sure to get nervous as soon as they see the face of a bailiff, so that they come into your terms about everything, whether it have any reference to the main business or not. How should it be otherwise? They know no better!"

"Yes, to be sure," said Higgins, an unfeeling laugh shaking his round shoulders, while choice recollections, as he called them, tickled his fancy. "I have seen them before now, peeping from doors

slightly ajar, and hastily pulling in a child, and shutting the door again in terror, when there was a sheriff's officer in the house; just as if the man were likely to eat the child, if he caught it on the stairs."

"Besides, you see," rejoined Snooks, "she is sure to be more nervous than usual, just now, being but a few days a widow. Women take these things to heart differently to what we do: so this is the moment to get her signature to any papers we like. 'There is a time for all things,' as saith the wise man. And I, being her own solicitor, you know, she'll naturally take my advice, as to those she ought to sign. Who else can she ask? For, luckily, you see, there is no trustee to consult; or, of course, they would never allow her to sign. But one, you see, is dead, a bankrupt; and t'other won't act. I gave him a friendly hint," he added, winking, "that he'd get into a mess if he did. That quite decided him. He did not ask *what mess?* He is not overburdened with sense, but he

has just enough to go right a-head, and take care of number one. Fools commonly are timorous. And so, we're clear of him. She has the power, to be sure, of appointing another trustee. But she don't know of that, I expect—or if she did hear Moss say so, I'll tell her it's a mistake. For if she were to put in a man, that had a pennyworth of brains in his skull—and would take any trouble about other people's business—which, luckily for us, few will—why, the game would be up! The decree would pass through the final forms—your client would have all the costs on both sides to pay, and he'd look sharp, mind you. Our bills would get taxed down to one third of their amount, or less, and the widow would come into peaceable possession—and what's more, have a title that couldn't be disputed again! The meshes, you see, were all very well for entagling a woman, hand and foot, but they wouldn't stand an hour, if

we'd a man in them; you might as well go to catch salmon with a herring net."

"We must avert such a catastrophe as that by all manner of means," muttered Higgins, looking seriously alarmed.

"Moss had a clear head," continued Snooks, "he knew what he was about. Everything was in train: for he always said, he should not be a long liver, and would put all straight for his wife and children, before he quitted them. It was for that I sent in a bill of costs, which I knew he wouldn't pay, just to cause delay, in the hope he'd slip his wind before his papers were out of my hands, which, of course, would leave the widow very much in my power; and as good luck would have it, so it proved. An exorbitant bill of costs is a perfect sheet anchor. The greater part of cases would run ashore, or go all to pieces, but for them. By means of them, one has a lien on papers—and clients hate to part with money—and people die—and partner-

ships get dissolved—and bankruptcies take place—and interests change hands—till matters, that were as plain as the nose on your face, get as complicated as one could wish. But she'll never think of appointing a trustee! Or if she should, she'll never find any one, that would take the trouble of so much as reading the papers. Whoever she appointed would just put his name to such deeds as I told him, being her solicitor, should have the signature of her trustee. Or, if you light on a cautious man—he refuses to act—that's your great security with trustees—they'll take no trouble. At least, I never knew but one that did, and little thanks he got. He was a professional man, and neglected his business, to help a minor to ten thousand a-year, that he'd never have touched but for him; and when the lump of a lad came of age, he saw his trustee sold up, and wouldn't help him; and when he died of a broken heart in consequence, wouldn't help the widow to bury him! And served him right! He spoilt

our harvest in that case! Why, he'd sit whole days there, if you'll believe me, studying over the parchments of that young man. I couldn't puzzle him—he could put his finger on every clause. But, to return to Mrs. Moss; if she should refuse the compromise, I reckon that we can spin out the case as long as we live; and then leave it for an inheritance to our children; for we'll have got it a little complicated, it is to be hoped, by that time.

"There was Mrs. Harvey's case, that I set up upon. Why it had been in my grandfather's hands, for twenty years; and my father's, for thirty years, before I came into it! Mrs. Harvey, Lord bless you man, became a widow when two of her daughters, as I have heard, could just run alone, and no more; and the third was not born; for it was a posthumous child. Well, to make a long story short; first Mrs. Harvey died, and then all her three daughters, one after another died, and of what think ye? Of old age, before the suit

ended. It was expected to conclude, of course, every term; but it was only last term's a twelve month, that I concluded it in favour of the nearest akin; to whom I delivered up the parchments, when there was nothing more to be got out of the estate.

"To be sure, we could not have prolonged it to that extent, if we had not thrown it into Chancery."

The sharp lad was heard chuckling to himself in the far corner.

"What's the matter now," cried Higgins, "you've got an egg in your nest, it seems, my lad: come, crack it, and let us go shares!"

"You were talking of Chancery," he replied. "There was Betsy, the poulter's girl, came here on the first of April, with a cat under her arm; to ask where Chancery was; for they wanted to be rid of their cat. She had given it away scores of times; but it was always back home, before her: so she had met a gentleman,

she said, who advised her to carry it to the lawyer's, and get him to put it into Chancery for her; where there would be no danger of it's getting out again in a hurry."

"He's a wag," observed Higgins; "and that for a lad so clever at the business, too, is something remarkable. I must come to you for a leaf out of your book soon. I should like to bring up my boys after your fashion—an education is a fortune, they say—They are young to be sure."

"Never too young!" pronounced St. Snooks emphatically. "I don't say I'd give them Coke upon Littleton to study while they're babies; no such thing. Its the way you put them in, that does it! 'Bring up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Now the method I followed was this: I accustomed them, from the first, to keep a sharp look out for their own interest, by never letting them have a thing that children like, without using their own wits to get it. If you'd seen that fellow," nod-

ding towards Jacob's high stool, "before he was five years old, of a cold winter's day, hard frost, snow on the ground, trotting out with his crumbs, and setting his springes for the birds, as carefully as a boy of twice his age, and watching round the corner, as patiently as a cat for a mouse; and when a blackbird, or even a sparrow, driven by hunger, would come picking up one of his crumbs; down with his trap in a twinkling, and round with the neck of the bird. Well, if you'll believe me, though it may seem to you a trifle; I always made a point, that he should have those identical birds, roasted for his own supper: with a view, you see, that he should learn what a deal one gains by being sharp. I might have talked, bless you, till I was black in the face; and it wouldn't have made the impression that the savoury smell and taste of those birds made, on a child that was hungry, after watching in the frost, for hours! He'd sniff, and sniff, and rub his hands; and smack his lips, and

say: 'I'm going to have my supper, don't it smell nice? and I'm to have it all myself; for I caught them all myself.' And while the birds were roasting I'd amuse him with comparing the foolish birds to a thoughtless client; and the frost and snow to a crisis in the money market; and the putting the crumbs of bread out to entice the birds to obliging a client with a little accommodation, and the coming down of the trap to foreclosing a mortgage, or declaring a bankruptcy; and, finally, the savoury supper to the attorney's snug profits—and he'd seem as delighted as if he understood me—and watch till I came to the word supper, to clap his hands and cry: '*I'm to eat it all myself!* I'll not give any one a bit!' And he'd keep his word; for little Rebecka, who was a year older, would stand opposite him, looking at every bit he put into his mouth, and he wouldn't let her have a taste, would cranch the very bones and lick his plate, and hand it to her, bidding her catch birds for herself, and

wring their necks herself—for she used to plague him, you see, trying to let the birds escape, and crying when he'd kill 'em before her—for all she wanted to eat them after they were roasted; for girls are just as full of contradiction as women; and like their mother Eve, fond of tasting!"

"No doubt of it!" ejaculated Higgins, with great solemnity. "All our sinfulness comes of them!"

For he too was a saint; though not quite so holy a one as Saint Snooks.

"Why there's Mrs. Snooks," rejoined Snooks. "It shows the depravity of vile human nature! She'd have dressed herself in silks, and that girl in flimsies; and gone off to that ball that was for the hospital—If I'd have let her—on pretext it was a charity ball! As if my children, as I told her, won't go to hell fast enough without a shove from her! And for the desperate wickedness of that young girl's heart—Rebecka I mean—If you'll believe me—She found out how to dance the Polka, and

learnt the tune too, without any instructor but the evil one himself! I caught her at it, singing, and skipping round the yew tree, there in that garden, when she thought I was out—Oh, the inherent corruption of human nature! I gave her a rap with my stick on her heels; and another on her head, that she'll not not forget in a hurry; and confined her to a dark room on bread and water for three whole days. And for Mrs. Snooks that came out crying, and taking the girl's part—I told her she was a fool, and no Christian. For it was not a thing to pass over lightly."

"What could you expect," said Higgins, in a tone of expostulation; "bringing a goat among the sheep, as you did, for filthy lucre?"

"True," replied the saint, casting up the whites of his eyes; "but Mrs. Snooks, in those days, was as comely a piece of flesh and blood, as you'd desire to see: and the money was wanting in the business: so, as my being of the elect, preserved me from

the danger of evil communication, those carnal comforts were permitted to me. But what was I saying? I forget; for when I think of those women that brought the old curse upon us; and still go on corrupting our innocence, and leading us, the chosen lambs of the fold, astray, it puts me out of all patience, it does."

"Why they would put any man out of patience," grunted Higgins; "you were talking of the lad Jacob; how he snared the birds."

"Yes to be sure," said Snooks; "and to this day, he'll talk of those roasted sparrows, and turn his jokes upon them—for he's very sharp, is Jacob—and call the clients birds. Like the last panic in the town here, when the tradespeople were all going to wreck and ruin, and some one becoming bankrupts every day and hour. He'd come in laughing, and say: 'Well, father, if they're not dropping off the perch one after another. How many of them shall we roast for supper?'"

"He's a wag—no doubt of it," cried Higgins.

"Famous times those," continued Snooks. "For you see as I had always a large balance of the Wolderland rents in my own hands, besides lodging the bulk in our bank, and paying his lordship's accounts, which all pass through my hands, the small in our own notes; the large in my own bills at two months, renewable two more, as often as suits me, I was enabled one way or another to make a good thing of it."

"And then the Chancery suit," said Higgins, "for you get paid though we don't."

"Softly there, Mr. Higgins. You're not working for nothing, neither. If I have the luck to butter my bread on both sides just now; you're buttering yours on one, at any rate. But, as I was saying, by these means, you see, I could always command money enough to oblige the tradespeople, to any amount I knew their property would

fetch, till by the time I saw they could'nt possibly meet the demand, I'd come slap down with—"

"The trap," interrupted Jacob.

"Good!" cried Higgins.

"An execution," continued Snooks, "and so get the possession of the bankrupt estate, and the working of the bankruptcy, both in our own hands. Then, you see, the master builders and dealers in an extensive way were all wanting large mortgages. It spread like the fever; it was who could borrow most; they were all stark mad together. But I knew how it must end, so I just kept amusing them that wanted to borrow, with make-believe clients, that had —according to my showing—five or seven thousand pounds to lend, but who were very particular about the security; so particular, mind ye, that they always objected to the title, or had found another investment by the time, after two or three months shilly shally, I had run up a bill of one hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds,

against the party wanting to borrow. I only found the money in good earnest, for those I knew couldn't stand a quarter, so as to ensure the speedy foreclosing of the mortgage, sale of the property, and re-investment of the money; all three profitable jobs again, you see."

At this moment, a plain chariot stopped before the gate of the high railings.

"Bless my soul and body!" exclaimed Snooks, rising. "If that isn't Mr. Adrian Wentworth's carriage!"

"Well! he has no pride about him, that's certain. It's long before the old lord will come to my offices, instead of sending for me."

"What can he want to-day?"

"He hasn't persuaded Lord Wolderland to pardon his son, I hope! and stop the suit."

Higgins, too, had risen in haste, resembling alarm. Without waiting to take leave of his fellow rogue, he bowed to the very ground, to the great man's heir; and

passing him, slid out by the same opening of the door which admitted Mr. Wentworth.

Snooks was bundling in the newly obtained papers of the Moss case, on the top of the old ones, and shutting down the lid of the box. Having effected this, in scrambling haste, he turned and shuffled forward to receive, with demonstrations of humble rejoicing, his supremely honoured, instinctively feared, and wholly unexpected, visitor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

No one could have seen Adrian crossing from the door to the table of the dingy parlour, without feeling that he could be no habitual denizen of the spot. That noble bearing; that dignity; that candour; that beauty of feature; that benevolent sweetness of expression; the very healthy hue of the complexion. Oh, how unlike anything that could have thriven for an hour in such an atmosphere, whether physically or morally weighed.

He stood for a moment, scanning, while he did so, the ranges of shelves, and labelled drawers. Then took the seat.

proffered him by Snooks, which was no other than that gentleman's own leathern arm-chair.

While laying his hat on the top of the box, which having stood at Snooks's elbow, now stood at his; a look of amused surprise, blending with a gratified smile, came over his features.

This was caused by the apparition of the four letters, Moss, conspicuously painted on the lid of the box, just on the spot upon which he was planting the crown of his hat.

"This is fortunate," he said. "Why these are the very papers I came to seek!"

"The deuce they are!" thought Snooks, his countenance falling in a most remarkable manner, with the under jaw hanging downwards, as if it had been broken. For having opened his mouth in amazement, and in horror forgotten to shut it again, it fell lower and lower each second, while he kept staring at his dreaded guest in

silence, afraid to commit himself by even a question.

The sharp lad here endeavoured to create a diversion in his father's favour, by officiously bringing forward another box, on which was painted Wolderlands, and saying—

"It is this box you want, I suppose, sir? The M might possibly look rather like a W as it stands. Our painter, as I always tell him, makes too many flourishes."

Adrian thanked him politely, and said he had got the box he wanted. "I find," he then continued, turning to Snooks, "that poor Mrs. Moss, is very disagreeably situated, in consequence of having no trustee who will act. I have, therefore, at the request of Mr. Fairfield, consented to take that office upon myself—"

"*You have!* inwardly ejaculated Snooks,"

"And the object of my visit," pursued Adrian, "is to demand Mrs. Moss's papers, and carry them home with me, that I may look

over them at my leisure, and see what my duties are."

"*I wish you may break your neck on the way first!*" thought Snooks. "It's very kind of you sir, I am sure!" he observed aloud; then, with cringing courtesy of manner, added: "But you will find law terms dry reading, I fear sir; better let me just draw you up an abstract of the case, to save you trouble. And in compliment to you sir, I'll not make any charge for it, to Mrs. Moss."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Adrian; in answer to the first part of the speech, not so dry, "I have made myself master of the technicalities of the law, with a view to expediting all matters of business I might have to arrange in the conduct of my own affairs. I can have no objection, however, to your favouring me with the abstract of which you speak. It will be useful to compare with my own view of the case."

"Certainly sir! certainly," stammered Snooks. "Here boy! Put this box aside,

it's in Mr. Wentworth's way. Of course," he added, with affected carelessness, "I retain the papers till I have drawn up the abstract; and then, indeed, you wont want them."

"Not at all in my way," said Adrian, "I find it rather convenient than otherwise. And he leaned his arm on the box, with increased firmness, to ensure its safety; adding, "I fear, as you would require the papers to draw out your abstract, that I must decline your assistance at present; for I am particularly anxious to commence my own examination of the documents immediately; and, for that purpose, mean to take them with me in the carriage to-day."

"*The devil you do!*" thought Snooks: "*and those papers in the box, that I have been making out such bugbears! I must draw in my horns on that point.*" But trying not to look frightened, or mortified; nay even endeavouring to smile, as he spoke; he said aloud: "Why, indeed, Mr. Wentworth, sir, I think you are taking a great

deal of unnecessary trouble. I, for one, I am not at all disposed, myself, that is to say—to attach any great importance to these said, newly found papers; which the opposite party have brought forward so pompously, that they rather alarmed me at first. And but for these papers, you see, I had brought the case to a most triumphant issue, just before the death of my respected client, Mr. Moss. Now, these papers, may be, you see, things in themselves futile! It may be all, a mere stratagem of the enemy, to frighten us into the compromise; which trick, if trick it be, they may be trying, on the strength that no one understands the case so well as Mr. Moss himself did; but if so, they'll find that they've been reckoning without their host, for I flatter myself that I know how to throw frivolous objections overboard as well as Moss, or any other man, dead or living, or in or out of the law! and, of course, being now acting for the *helpless widow*, I'd be

devoid of the feelings of a man and a christian, if I didn't do my best for her."

"I am happy to find you take so cheerful a view of the case," interrupted Adrian, with great composure. "Poor Mrs. Moss's affliction, must have inclined her to view things in a desponding light; for she understood you to say," he added, pronouncing slowly, and with peculiar precision, "that these newly discovered papers left her without a hope of success, and that her only chance of escaping beggary, was to accept the compromise, wretched as it was, which the opposite party, entirely out of consideration for her bereavement, had been persuaded by you to offer. And that, further, you advised her as a friend to accept the offer of the Messrs. Higgins; adding your belief, that if she rejected it, and so provoked the opposite party to continue proceedings; she would be utterly ruined, and driven forth to beg, with her children in her hand."

"Humph," thought Snooks, who had

been looking more and more aghast at each word. "You have got your lesson a deuced deal too well! This will never do—I must knock under altogether—I see that!"

"As you most justly observe, sir," he said aloud, "Mrs. Moss's affliction does affect her intellect a little, and prevent her comprehending statements very clearly. In this instance, you see, she confounds a contingency, with a certainty. What I said to Mrs. Moss was, that *if*—mind ye—*if* the papers were what the opposite party represented them to be; such would be—mind ye—*would be, not was* my advice! You see, sir, that makes all the difference—for I had not, at that time, seen the papers; therefore, I could be no judge of their importance; only I felt it to be my duty, before God and man, to put a helpless widow, who had no one else to advise her, on her guard, and prepare her mind for the compromise, should it prove her only refuge. But now, that I have those papers in my own possession, I have

little doubt, that when I have time to examine them, I shall be able to set all to rights."

"In your own profession, Mr. Snooks?" exclaimed his hearer, in evident amazement. "This is something quite new! So the opposite party, have given you up their most important papers?"

Snooks, terrified at the incautious admission he had made, began stammering out a reply, which he had neither time nor presence of mind to compose before hand, and for which, therefore, he was obliged to trust to his scattered wits as he went on.

"I don't wonder—that is to say, at all wonder—that—that you should look surprised—that is to say, surprised—It is not a little surprising, that I should have managed to get hold of these papers; so vaunted by the opposite party—But that's what it is, do you see—" he had thought of a hit, at last, and brightened a little—"that's what it is," he went on, "I'm more than a match for them; do you see. All

the better for Mrs. Moss! as I know how, of course, to turn all these things to account for the helpless widow and her orphans! Which I shall do, as is my duty before God and man; whether I ever get a shilling or not. When my feelings, as a man and a Christian, are touched, Mr. Wentworth, I never think of my own interest!"

Adrian listened immoveable as a statue.

"Higgins, the solicitor on the other side," continued Snooks; "that was he whom you saw go out—came over this morning, thinking to bully me into the compromise—not knowing, you see, that my helpless client has a friend, as well as a legal adviser, in me! He brought the papers with him, just to point out a plausible passage or two, that he thought might frighten me. At this crisis you arrived; and in taking up his hat and gloves hastily, to make way for so honoured a client, he laid the papers on the table, and forgetting them, in his confusion, went off without them."

"Showing how invaluable he considered them!" observed Mr. Wentworth, deliberately, and with a slight smile of cold scorn on his lips.

"Upon which," continued Snooks, "having the interests of Mrs. Moss at heart, I laid hands upon them, and slipped them into the box with the rest."

This was said with a momentary look of self-gratulation; instantly checked by one of terror as he saw his mistake.

"Indeed!" said Adrian, looking round at the box with visibly increased interest; on which, perceiving that the key was in the lock; he turned it, took it out, and, with a gratified smile, put it calmly, and slowly, into his waistcoat pocket; observing:

"A box which contains such invaluable documents ought not to stand unlocked!"

"What a precious fool my old father is!" thought the sharp lad, as he seemed to scribble away at his far desk.

"What a hypocrite, as well as scoundrel,

the fellow is!" thought Adrian, as he contemplated the guilt-stricken features of the trembling villain, who had just recollected a certain pencil memorandum of Higgins' on the back of the newly brought forward papers, which he had not had time to efface; and which, if read by Mr. Wentworth, would utterly belie every word he had said, about the boasts, and threats of the opposite party.

"I'd have put the box out of sight," thought Snooks, the marrow quitting his bones, "if it had been that medling old fellow Fairfield that I had seen coming to the door; but who could have suspected that Mr. Wentworth knew, or cared anything about Mrs. Moss. Mr. Wentworth, the man in the whole world, it most concerns me to keep the good opinion of—Whatever can he be writing, there, on those two pieces of paper?"

Adrian continued to write—Snooks went on with his internal soliloquy:

"Who'd have thought that he'd have

been appointed Mrs. Moss's trustee, of all men on earth! If the devil had asked me: 'Who shall be Mrs. Moss's trustee?' I'd have answered: 'Not Mr. Wentworth, most assuredly!' He never must read those documents—it's a desperate case! something must be done to prevent it! He'd see, with half an eye, that's been all a hum! I'd lose his confidence altogether—and what's worse, I'd lose the Wolderland business, that's like my own estate, in a manner—a regular handsome income, the per centage only; independent of good will, money, and fines; and leases, and windfalls of all sorts; and the use of the money in hard times, to turn over in scores of ways! What are all the pickings to be had off the bones of widows and orphans to this? The old serpent hates the elect, and has thrown that woman in my way, to be the ruin of me! I thought, much or little, the pickings were safe gains, at least—and so they would have been! What could she or her children have done?"

And he watched the movements of the writer's fingers, as he continued:

"But, with Mr. Wentworth to back her, it's altogether another story! I never should ha' put those bailiffs in! It's that that has done it! It's driven her to desperation, and made her send for the parson! He's at the bottom of it—depend upon it! If I'd made believe a little longer to be a friend, she'd have taken my advice in everything—she'd have come into any terms! Yes, yes, that was too fool hardy of me! I thought I could have carried a high hand, once Moss slipped his wind. I thought she hadn't a friend in the world—that with the papers in my hands, and no trustee to act, I had it all my own way—but that won't do now! What can he be writing about still?"

Adrian, immediately after taking possession of the key of the important box, had drawn a sheet of paper towards him, and dividing it in two parts, had commenced writing on one of the portions. This he had finished; he was now writing on the

other, which prolonged occupation had afforded Snooks abundant time for his train of reflections. When Adrian had completed his task, and was strewing sand over his performance, he politely requested Mr. Snooks to ring the bell for his servant, to carry the box to the carriage.

Snooks, driven to desperation, commenced stammering out:

"Mr. Wentworth, I hope you won't take it ill of me, sir; you are the very last gentleman under heaven, I'd offend sir. But you know sir, business is business—and you see, I have a lien on these papers: I cannot, in justice to my family, let that box out of my office, till my bill of costs is paid. 'He that provideth not for his own, is worse than an infidel.'"

"I have anticipated your objection," replied Adrian, pushing towards him one of the half sheets of paper, on which he had been writing.

"Here, you see, I undertake the payment of your bill of costs—when taxed

observe! This other," he continued, turning the second paper towards Snooks, "is for you to sign. It is the discharge of the bailiffs from the house of Mrs. Moss, who, on your accepting my security, is, you are aware, no longer your debtor. Of course, you do not hesitate?" he added, seeing that the fellow did hesitate, not knowing what to do. "You do not doubt either my solvency, or my honesty?"

Snooks, utterly confounded by this appeal from the heir of Lord Wolderland, signed the discharge in silence; and, with a trembling hand, and a mouth wider open than ever, restored the demanded paper, and took the other in exchange.

"Now you will have the goodness to ring the bell," repeated Adrian, with a certain share of stern firmness, perceptible through the polite and quiet tone of his voice.

The bell being rung, and answered, he called for his own servant; and on the appearance of the man, placed the box,

himself, in his hands, and followed him to the carriage, bowing slightly to Snooks and Son as he passed.

Prior to returning to the Wolderlands, he drove to Mrs. Moss's cottage, dismissed her unwelcome guests, and informed her that she might anticipate a speedy and successful conclusion to the whole affair. Which opinion was founded, he explained, first, on Snooks's guilty manner, and rash admissions; and, secondly, on the slight examination of the papers, he had been able to make, as he drove along, especially of the first in the box, which had some remarkable memoranda on the outside, as follows—

"Papers of no consequence being irrelevant to the case."

This first memorandum bore a date of several years past. Under it were some lines in pencil, dated that morning. They were to the following effect—

"Here are the papers you ask for. But you can make nothing of them! You see

above, they have always been thought useless.

"It will take something more than this old lumber, to shake Mrs. Moss's incontestible title! Higgins."

These lines Adrian pointed out to Mrs. Moss, adding his own opinion, that they were conclusive.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE scene is Lord Wolderland's library—the hour morning.

His lordship, enthroned in his chair of state, an open letter in his hand, was casting towards the door, those impatient and reproachful glances, which it was his wont to bestow on that mute and inoffensive object, whenever, having willed the entrance of any person into his august presence, the apparition of that person, did not pass through the door-way, simultaneously with the passing of the act of volition, through the chambers of his lordship's brain. As to impossibilities, they were, in his opinion,

acts of rebellion on the part of fate, which only enraged his lordship the more, because he knew not exactly with whom to be angry.

In a few moments Adrian entered with the air, as on a former occasion, of one, who having been summoned in haste, would enquire, by his looks, why?

As soon as polite salutations had been interchanged; Lord Wolderland presented him the open letter, saying:

"I have just received this intimation, that the woman to whom my son has been so long married, without issue of the marriage, is, at last, about to present him with an addition to his family. The child may prove a son. Therefore, as such an event would change so considerably your prospects, that I could no longer sanction a marriage between Miss Wentworth and yourself; I lose not a moment in informing you of the circumstance. At the same time, the child may prove a girl; or, should it prove a boy, may not live. Under all

such contingencies then, I should be as anxious as ever to proceed with our family arrangement; consequently, I should be as far as ever (for the present,) from advising you, or authorising my grand-daughter, to form any other connection."

Adrian, to whom his Lordship's sentiments on this subject could make no possible difference, as long as he believed that his addresses had been rejected by Catherine herself; bowed with a degree of apparent submission, which raised him very much in his Lordship's opinion. He agreed with him respecting the uncertainty of infant life—referred to statistical calculations, &c., &c.

"I have always considered him a very sensible young man," thought Lord Wolderland.

Adrian, on his part, had the subject been a less serious one, would have been disposed to smile at the tone of authority assumed by his elder relative, on the strength of being the head of the family; but, as

it was, he merely felt glad to be spared the task of himself declining the alliance in conformity with his promise to Catherine. For, though he would have strictly kept his promise, had it been necessary; there had always been something repugnant to his feelings, though perhaps he had not asked himself why, in thus shutting out, as it were with his own hand, the last lingering ray, which, though he did not believe to be hope, he felt to be light, and which was kept alive in his heart, despite of his reason, by something undefined, and undefinable, in Catherine's manner; especially in the gentle expression of her dear eyes! For oh! he did love them still—when they met his—now a rare occurrence—Yet, when it happened, they were not withdrawn quite as hastily, as in the earlier stages of their love—there was now a look that seemed to express: "I have something to say to you, if I dare!" But at this point the cheek would pale as the eyes fell; instead of blushing more and more deeply

each moment, as it used to do on the former occasions; when the very act of casting down the eyes had seemed to the conscious heart too plain a confession of its feelings.

Lord Wolderland had given the same intelligence, and the same command to Catherine, about half an hour before; and also informed her that, as the company at the Wolderlands were now dispersing, he would, at present, permit her to absent herself for a short time, until he should think fit to send for her again.

Catherine, who had received a letter from her father, by the same post, expressing a very earnest wish that she should be with him while Mrs. Wentworth must keep her room; was greatly pleased to receive this immediate, and unasked permission to depart; and further comforted, beyond expression, by the prospect of seeing her own dear father; and being herself on the spot to ward off from him all those mysterious dangers with which she believed him to be surrounded.

At first, she had no time for any other thoughts; except, indeed, a vague sense, that there was not the drawback of losing Adrian's society, by returning home; for he was going to town at any rate, parliament being about to re-open.

On quitting her grandfather's awful presence, she had glided quietly into the great saloon, which, at that hour, was generally vacant. She had crossed it with a noiseless step, and passing between the harp and the flower stand, taken up a position in her favourite window. The prospect it commanded was lovely. The magnificent extent of park lay before her with its great trees, and the sheep, in picturesque groups, collected beneath their shade.

Towards one side were peeps of the glistening river, with its many beautiful turnings, giving occasional glimpses of the well-known, still loved path on its bank, but so diminished by distance, that it seemed to belong to a child's toy show, while on the further steep and rocky bank, patches of grazing

ground, with miniature cattle grazing on them, overtopped the tall trees, that grew below at the water's edge, as well as those that protruded from the face of the rock, wherever a crevice contained earth enough to nourish a root.

The direct front view ran along an avenue of majestic width, and immeasurable length, formed of trees of gigantic growth; its distant perspective terminating in an opening upon some fine wild mountain scenery.

From time to time, an antlered stag would come out from the trees on one side, look around him, bound across the wide avenue, and enter cover on the opposite side. Then a doe, followed by her fawn, as if deriving courage from his example, would perform, though with a more timid air, a like transit.

Catherine had stood, for upwards of half-an-hour, looking out on all this; sometimes alive to the beauties of the scene, but oftener lost in a deep reverie.

At length a form came in view, moving slowly from the house towards the avenue. Why was Catherine's attention vividly aroused—why did she follow that form with her eyes? And why was she now secretly regretting that she had not strayed into the park, instead of the drawing-room? when she had quitted the library? She could not, perhaps, have answered these queries herself; who, therefore, can do so for her? She thought, indeed, that if it had so happened, that she had gone into the park, it was most likely she might have been walking along that avenue, with the person she now saw walking there alone. The only thing, however, which was certain, was, that her going there at present was quite out of the question; so she remained where she was, gazing after the moving form, and wishing it would turn and look up; but it did neither. It went on—on—on—as if it intended to pursue the whole length of that long avenue. At last, however, it did turn, and walk slowly back, with arms folded, and eyes on the ground.

When arrived beneath the window, however, the musing figure, with the arms still folded on the breast, raised the head and eyes, in the manner of one intending to contemplate at full leisure, an object fraught with interesting associations. She beheld the face, and met the eyes of Adrian. A look of recognition lighted up his features. He smiled, bowed, waved his hand in the direction of the entrance, and approached the house with a quickened step. She knew that he would be at her side in a few seconds —and they would be alone too! Her thoughts were thrown into a tumult of vague anticipations. His manner showed that he was coming in on purpose to say something! The new circumstances of both—the change in her grandpapa's plans must be the subject he wished to speak upon; and that subject must lead to the explanation, so long at once desired and feared.

At any rate, he could not speak on those subjects without again saying that he loved her. She should once more then, whatever

else might or might not betide, hear those words from Adrian's leps.

What a thrill of ecstasy accompanied this thought. Such a moment would be cheaply purchased, if a lifetime of agony were the price.

And might she not say, at least, that she was not ungrateful? Might she venture thus far? Would this be wrong? Or might it not lead to consequences that might be wrong. Was everything then that could make her happy wrong?

Yet he would act honourably, and kindly, and generously, if confided in. She was sure of that—but what would he think of her? Ought such generosity to be accepted? at least it ought not to be sought by her.

And what would he think of her having been obliged to enter into such engagements? Woud he judge her harshly on that point? She thought not if all were explained. But could she, ought she to explain all. But could she, ought she to cast herself thus at his very feet? Oh no!

it would be indelicate, to the last degree—she must not—she would not!

He must only think her ungrateful. A pang shot through her heart. She paused—she mused. Had she not already admitted as much? yet he had said nothing—he had done nothing. Had he understood? Perhaps he would not understand; if so, was it for her to force enlightenment upon him? And despondency succeeded to the delirium of temporary joy, awakened by the hope, nay certainty, so entirely felt for one short moment, of hearing again the music of that voice, saying that he loved her.

Adrian entered the drawing-room, and approached with an unhesitating step. But his voice did not possess its usual composure; nor his manner its habitual self-possession, as he said:

"You have heard Lord Wolderland's accounts from Lyme Regis, no doubt? I, too, have had a letter from Mr. Wentworth, kindly inviting me to spend a few days at

Lyme Cottage, on my way to London; and permitting me the privilege of escorting you, if our periods for quitting the Wolderlands can be arranged to agree."

What a sad confusion Catherine's poor brain was in. What a whirling round of thoughts. How wrong, and how right, did the same things appear within the same second. And all the while her heart kept beating at such a tumultuous rate. Yes—if it would have been quiet for but a moment, she might have been able to have decided on something—but it would not. With the thoughts just enumerated, crowding her mind, she had coloured; while her fingers strayed, as on a former trying occasion, from blossom to blossom among the exotics on the flower-stand; and in her throat, there was a sensation as of being strangled, so that she could not have given utterance to a word, if the fate of worlds had been at stake; and that she had even known what she was going to say, which, at present, she most certainly did not.

"Does she still dread," thought Adrian, "that I mean to persecute her with renewed addresses?"

He had sought Catherine, debating with himself, whether or not, after having mentioned the ostensible object of the interview, an allusion to Lord Wolderland's change of plan, as exempting him from the necessity of fulfilling his promise of formally declining the alliance, could be considered, by Catherine, as too near an approach to the interdicted subject: for this was a point, upon which he would have been glad to have come to a clear understanding. But her manner discouraged him. He even fancied that he saw, in this excessive embarrassment, an unwillingness that he should accompany her to Lyme Regis; arising, he supposed, from some secret objection, to his becoming acquainted with his rival: and, sooth to say, he did not himself anticipate such an event, with much pleasure. Miss Wentworth, he thought, fears, perhaps that, were this gentleman and myself to meet,

scenes might take place, which would lead to a premature discovery of her secret engagement; or at least, prove very painful to her; by keeping her in a state of constant apprehension. With the uttermost formality of manner, therefore, he added:

"If Miss Wentworth considers, that my visit would be, in any way—(she is not obliged to explain why)—disagreeable, or painful to her; I can plead, without being guilty of an exaggeration of the truth, that I have, at present, very little time at my disposal."

This extreme coldness, so unlike what her fond anticipations had painted, sent a chill to the heart of Catherine. Its quick beating ceased. The poor little flutterer lay motionless at the bottom of its cage; like a bird, suddenly struck dead! This strange suspension of every pulse, gave her the seeming composure, to attempt a reply.

Forcing a sort of nervous laugh, she said, "Of course you jest. You must know very well, that your company will be a great

gratification to papa; who will, he says in his letter, be delighted to become better acquainted with you. And, as for me, you think me, I suppose, the most ungrateful of beings! Why should I not be always glad to see you—and especially as my father's guest?"

"There might have been reasons," he rejoined, "and if there had been; I should have submitted, without venturing an enquiry."

What a continued conversation on such dangerous topics, might have led to, must remain a mystery; for Catherine had not self command sufficient to sustain her under further trial: she feared giving way to tears; and saying she had letters to write, a plea which was perfectly true, left the room. She little thought, how the seemingly simple mention of writing letters, had, at once pained, and steeled the heart of Adrian. Fancy busily pourtrayed, the joyful anticipations of a speedy meeting with her affianced lover, with which the heart of

Catherine, would doubtless beat, as she wrote. Nay, even some of the affectionate expressions, which it was possible she might use, officiously presented themselves, to torment him. Not that he encouraged such idle speculations; far from it: but that his very refusal to discuss them fully, seemed to make it more difficult to dismiss them entirely. They stood there, in the antechambers of thought, like importunate petitioners, refusing to depart, till they had been heard; while he considered it a stern duty, to refuse to hear them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CATHERINE'S plea of letter-writing was, as we have said, strictly true. And with that natural longing of the heart, to seek a balm for its aching wounds, she was impatient, the moment she reached her room, to throw herself, as it were, on the bosom of her dear father; in other words, to seat herself at her writing-table, and commence an epistle to him, overflowing with the tenderest expressions of her filial affection, and of delight at the fond hope of being so soon clasped to his breast. Oh! what a blessed sanctuary did that hope now offer to her weary spirit!

Pity for those who were orphans, passed across her thoughts, and tears of sympathy, blended with those of tenderness, which, at the moment, filled her eyes.

She reproached herself for having ever shared the heart which had so long been wholly her dear father's with any other being.

Then she tried to console herself with the thought, that if she had done wrong in this, she had met her punishment half way, by immolating every rival emotion, on the altar of that first, that deep affection. And when the consolation sought from this source, began to grow very like a renewal of affliction, she hastened to seek her comfort in the hope, that what she had done, would be the means of preserving her father from as much of the discomfort of his position as it was in her power to ward off.

Then why cling madly, as she had done, to the foolish wish of hearing Adrian say again that he loved her? Was it not sel-

fish? Was it not cruel? Did it not suffice to be wretched herself; why should she wish others to be so also? Ought she not rather to wish—But she could not finish such a wish! No! he will think me ungrateful, and forget me time enough, without my wishing it! she thought, pressing down her eyelids on her starting tears, which thus barred in their passage, seemed to dart like arrows back through her brain!

But she was obliged to arouse herself, for she had another letter to write. A task of pain, in which no admixture of comfort was blended. She had doubts to remove; promises to renew; reproaches to reply to; justifications of her own conduct to indite; and all this, where neither affection nor respect had part, and where fear alone guided her pen, and compelled her to heap assurance on assurance, that suspicions which would have been bliss to her, had she dared to make them truths, were without foundation!

And to be obliged to render this account of herself, where her heart could not have given its willing confidence to have preserved her from an instant and a violent death.

Oh, how galling did she feel her chains to be; how hateful, how degrading her slavery! But her father! her dear father! must he wear real chains? must the iron enter into the soul, to save her silly pride from fancied humiliation?

What matter what others thought! Let her think only of what he felt—or might feel!

She did not see Adrian, either at dinner, or in the evening. He spent the day at the Fairfield's. Indeed, she had little of his society, between the present period and that of her quitting the Wolderlands, for the time was short, and he had a vast deal to arrange.

First, he had Mrs. Moss's affairs to put in train. He had read the papers carefully, and found all clear. He had asso-

ciated Mr. Fairfield with himself in the trust; and, at each step, had fresh reason to anticipate a speedy and triumphant conclusion; Snooks being now afraid to throw the slightest obstacle in the way; and anxious only to get off without the punishment to which he knew he was lawfully liable, should Mrs. Moss be advised to prosecute him for the threatening letters. The abjectness with which, in the hope of averting this, he cringed to Adrian and Mr. Fairfield, was pitiable to behold, and remember that the crawling reptile had a human soul!

Both gentlemen, however, did advise the prosecution and open exposure of this ruthless villain, for example sake, and as a protection to future widows and future orphans from those arch

> "Hypocrites, who devour widows' houses
> And for a pretext make long prayers!"

Adrian, of course, laid the matter before

Lord Wolderland; the character of Snooks, as his man of business, being an affair of some importance to his Lordship. That nobleman accordingly, saw the necessity of getting rid of a person so devoid of principle; and therefore, ordered Snooks to give in his accounts, and prepare for dismissal.

This was followed by the prosecution for the threatening letters, and particulars came out, showing the nefarious intentions of the writer, for which Snooks was condemned to two years, as a chained felon, on board the hulks; and then for transportation for life, as a convict, to Norfolk Island.

Much as he had robbed, he had speculated still more; and, urged on by avarice, been ruined by the rail-road mania; so that, on having to wind up his affairs, he proved a bankrupt.

The hopeful Jacob, thus thrown on his own resources, joined the swell-mob; and got by turns into the stocks, the tread-mill, and the pillory. During these agreeable

varieties of position, he always preserved his predilection for roasted sparrows, and would catch birds about stable-yards and back streets, and fill his pockets with them, at times when his fortunes were so low, that he had not access to a spark of fire, wherewith to cook them.

His crimes increasing in magnitude as he proceeded, he was successively imprisoned, sent to the hulks, and finally transported. He is said, on the rencontre of two bands of convicts, at one of our penal settlements, to have met with, and brutally stabbed, his wretched father, alledging that he had been the cause of all his crimes and misfortunes.

Escaping, he got back to England, under a feigned name; married an elderly woman, a cook who had saved a little money. Subsequently became acquainted with the daughter of a publican, who had some money, and wishing to marry her, murdered his wife, and for this was at last hanged.

But all this is anticipation.

To return, then, to the avocations of Adrian. He had also the reforms of the Wolderland school to put in train, and leave in the hands of Mr. Fairfield, together with numberless cases of humble afflictions, and humble wrongs, which he had undertaken to console and to right, and many of which required something done, to advance or to complete them, prior to his departure.

And in addition to all these numerous claims on his attention, he had promised to spend a few days with the Duke at Ravensdale, to assist him with his advice, respecting the extensive improvements which his Grace was introducing into his schools, and the condition of his tenantry generally: for the Duke, having drawn his best inspirations on those subjects, from the speeches of Adrian in the last session, followed up by subsequent conversation, while at the Wolderlands, he was anxious to show him what he had done, and tell him what he intended to do, and reap the benefit of his

recommendations, even down to the minutia of localities.

"When you are Prime Minister," said his Grace, with playful courtesy, as they were examining together the plans of a farm garden and play ground, for the Duke's principal school; "your time will be too much occupied for such details; I must therefore seize the golden opportunity of getting a lesson."

Adrian endeavoured to parry the prophetic compliment. But his Grace rejoined more seriously:

"I look on you, my young friend, without exaggeration, as our future Premier. Motives so high, and so pure, sustained by talents so brilliant—and favoured, too, by a social position, such as yours—cannot fail to march steadily forward, to the responsible trust of which we speak. Every difficulty, every emergency, everything which makes the souls of men quail within them, before the coming storm, sends such minds to the helm! Happy the nation,

which, in her hour of need, can produce such!

"You seem to me," he added, "to have received precisely the education which ought to be given to every Prime Minister. And your present life is certainly the very best continued preparation for such a career. The practical knowledge of details, which active benevolence must give, not only fits a man to judge of the merits or demerits of ameliorations proposed by others, but enables him, when in power, to prepare and bring forward, himself, great and efficient measures."

"There ought to be some preparation, no doubt," replied Wentworth, "for so immense a responsibility!"

"There should be," rejoined the Duke, "a special education for those who are to wield the destinies of nations! Nor do I see, why a certain proficiency in subjects necessary to successful legislation should not be required, to make a man an eligible candidate for a seat in Parliament. It is ab-

surd to witness how the time of the House and the country is lost, session after session, while members are arguing points, which ought to be considered *axioms*, not *questions!*"

"And when it happens," observed Adrian, "that the discussion regards bread, and millions are starving the while; or education, and millions, who were innocent children, are growing into depraved men and women, the exhibition becomes something worse than absurd! While, as regards an individual destined to hold the helm of the state, surely for his own peace of mind's sake, he should be glad to learn all that human knowledge can teach; for in the position he ambitions, a man with the purest motives and best intentions, may, by a mere mistake, work incalculable mischief.

"It would, indeed, form a somewhat curious chapter in political statistics, could the numbers be ascertained, who suffer from every error of judgment on the part of a minister! Perhaps the best approximation

to it would be the population of the globe; for so linked is the fate of the human family, that the whole chain must vibrate to the misrule or the right rule, which prevails at any point. But even this liberal estimate would fall short of the truth, for, as the eternal chain of causes and effects, necessarily links each generation with that which is to follow, the vibrations must go forward as long as the world endures, and thus affect the woe or weal, of countless millions yet unborn!"

"You have certainly no light notion of the responsibility attached to wielding the fate of nations," observed his Grace; "but so much the better: you are the more fitted to be our Prime Minister!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE Wolderland carriage stood at the door to convey his Lordship's grand-daughter, escorted by Mr. Adrian Wentworth, to the town of ——, whither the travelling carriage of the latter had been sent on the previous evening, that the horses might be fresh.

Adrian had decided on going to Lyme Regis. He felt impelled to do so, by a kind of fascination. He even believed it to be almost a duty—however painful the task might be—to avail himself of the opportunity, thus afforded him, of examining the character of the person to whom Catherine had expressed a determination to

unite her fate. He should of course meet the gentleman at Lyme Cottage. He felt his situation to be a strange one indeed! He was Miss Wentworth's only confidant, and considering her youth and inexperience, did not this render him, in some measure, responsible for her future happiness? Should his rival appear to be every way a worthy and estimable person, it would certainly tend to reconcile him to his own disappointment; and he had no right to suppose, that Miss Wentworth, with so much good sense, and so much good taste on every other subject, had made a choice altogether unworthy of her.

During the journey to Lyme Regis, Adrian's conviction that he was about to see his rival in person, tended, for the moment, to estrange his feelings from his companion. The vision of this mysterious correspondent, which had hitherto haunted his imagination, surrounded with a sort of superstitious dread; but shadowy and ever ready to melt into thin air, if he but met

the eyes of Catherine; had no longer anything of the vague, or the ideal about it. On the contrary, it now stood before him with the most unpoetical reality; young and good-looking, of course, while the idea that Miss Wentworth would be particularly glad to see this person; with—for the weakness must be confessed—a glimpse, short-lived as the revelations made by the lightning's flash, of a lover's meeting, altogether wrought an extreme dryness of manner, a sort of setting of the teeth to bear torture, of the betrayal of which he was in a great degree unconscious; but which Catherine felt acutely. She began at last almost to find her faith in his love shaken, in despite of having again recourse to her old expedient, of repeating to herself each word of that one energetic declaration of his attachment, and thus reassuring herself that she had heard and understood aright—Yes! no doubt, he loved her then —but now.

Here a question forced itself upon her,

which caused her great pain: Could it be the change in her prospects—her being in all probability no longer a great heiress, which made him now begin to consider her rejection of his hand, rather a fortunate circumstance than otherwise?—Oh, how wretched this idea made her!

Whatever it was, however, there was certainly something quite different from his usual manner.

Then came vague thoughts of his going to London—of his forgetting her—of his falling in love with some very great heiress, and being married most probably, before she should see him again. And as, in her opinion, no one who was at liberty could refuse him, his finding innumerable great heiresses willing to marry him, seemed so likely to happen, that this train of thought threw her quite into despair.

As for the object of these reflections, he sat looking out of the window, watching the milestones; and as each was left behind, feeling the disagreeable conviction that he

was drawing nearer and more near to his rival; the reality of whose physical existence, each such visible proof of approach to their journey's end, made still more intensely present to his apprehensions. Nay, the said milestones were beginning to seem to him part and parcel of that gentleman, and to look triumphant and insulting, and consequently, he was beginning to feel towards them, a very rational, christian, and well-founded hatred.

At this moment Catherine, who was very innocently thinking of her dear father, and little imagining the additional pang which her simple remark would cause her companion, said in her own sweet voice:

"What pleasure it gives me, every milestone we pass!"

"I have no doubt it does!" he replied, with unnecessary readiness, and a forced smile, which was anything but pleased or pleasing.

"What harm can there be," thought poor Catherine. "in what I have said? Yet he thinks it wrong, I am sure!"

For now she knew his face so well, and so fondly sought the light of his smile, that not the slightest fleecy cloud could cross the horizon of his mind, without its shadow falling upon her! Oh, the happy time! when those eyes ever looked approval, when that smile always beamed with indulgence towards every little mistake, caused by her inexperience. Perhaps she might not have learnt her lesson so thoroughly, had it commenced with this disagreeable chapter.

It is generally believed, that love cannot live long, unless felt to be mutual. Why then, has not Adrian, labouring under such conviction as he entertains, ceased to love?

Perhaps the solution is this: that when the feeling is mutual, though unconfessed, there exists between the parties a secret sympathy, which can defy all convictions of the understanding, and softly breathing on the sacred flame, keep it from expiring.

The day passed thus; and as evening closed in, Catherine was clasped to the heart of her father, and forgot, for a few delightful moments, that there was such a thing as sorrow in the world.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE evening at Lyme cottage was not very animated; although Madame de Lyoncourt, who had already arrived from Paris, to attend the accouchment of her daughter, appeared disposed to promote conversation; but there was an effort about her manner, as if it were assumed, to make the low spirits of Mrs. Wentworth less remarked, while even Mr. Wentworth was not quite natural, confining his remarks to subjects the most indifferent, from an idea that any illusion to the present hopes of his immediate circle, could not be very welcome to his visitor, whose brilliant prospects, their realization would

so materially change. Adrian, also, though too well-bred not to listen with apparent interest, to whatever his host might think fit to propound, was subject, during any intervals of silence, to fall into short reveries, from which he would start and look round, if the door chanced to open.

When the party in the drawing-room broke up for the night, the three ladies stood together for a few moments round Catherine's fire; and Madame de Lyoncourt remarked, that her daughter, from never having been very fortunate under similar circumstances, had given way, on the present occasion, to most unreasonable fears, not only of disappointment, as usual, but of a fatal result.

Mrs. Wentworth sighed, and looked as if the observation caused her additional pain.

A moment after, when bidding Catherine good-night, she kissed her, and, looking in her face with an expression of anxious scrutiny, said,

"Mr. Adrian Wentworth seems to be a most charming and delightful young man!"

"Why should that make you sigh?" asked her mother, in a somewhat impatient tone, yet forcing a laugh.

"Did I sigh? I must have been thinking, I suppose, that Catherine and her cousin, had, in all probability, exchanged sighs ere this."

"Is it so, Catherine dear!" she said, endeavouring to assume a playfulness of manner. "At any rate, he is in love with you: that I saw, at once, by his eyes."

When following her mother out of the room, she seized her opportunity, fell back a step or two, and closing the door softly, said in an under tone,

"Tell me, love, what was that parchment you signed the morning you set out for the Wolderlands? I have been dying to know; but dare not write, lest—"

Before she could finish her sentence, Madame de Lyoncourt returned, looked at

her with a watchful and suspicious glance, and taking her arm, drew her away, saying, "it was a shame to keep Miss Wentworth up, who must be fatigued after her long drive. Quite a little journey."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BREAKFAST was scarcely over when Jean de Lyoncourt came in, nominally, to pay a morning visit.

Mrs. Wentworth introduced him, carelessly, as her brother, so that Adrian, who either had never heard, or did not remember, what had been Mrs. Wentworth's name, had no means of guessing that of the individual so presented; and, therefore, did not immediately identify him with the mysterious correspondent, to whom Catherine's letters from the Wolderlands had been addressed. Yet in about a quarter of an hour, he had discovered that the young

man, what ever his name might be, was vulgar, forward, shallow, and worldly minded.

"This, at any rate," he thought, with a perfectly comfortable certainly, "is not the received admirer of Miss Wentworth."

When Jean de Lyoncourt had formally taken leave, and been seen from the windows to mount his horse, and with something more of fuss, and wheeling round and round, than was necessary, ride off; Catherine quietly quitted the room.

Adrian remained conversing with Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth; and reading, or seeming to read the newspaper, for quite an hour, so sure did he feel, that the visitor he dreaded, yet was impatient to see, would, as a matter of course, make his appearance that morning.

"An accepted lover," he thought, "or, at least, one who is on terms to correspond so closely, will not surely allow the day to pass without calling, after so long an absence."

At length, however, weary of sitting within, he rose and left the room, to take a walk on the cliffs. The churchyard he had visited at sunrise.

As he was crossing the hall, a door on its opposite side, was opened cautiously, and quickly closed again. The one instant, it had been open, however, had revealed to him the form of Catherine, seated within, near a table; and that of the young man who had taken his leave of the family an hour ago, in the almost simultaneous act, of coming out, and drawing back; evidently to avoid being seen by him!

Adrian hastened towards the cliffs. He was thunder struck!! What was he to think?

It was impossible to believe this person, the long dreaded rival in whose favour he was to resign all his dearest hopes—No, no! that could not be. The idea was too ridiculous, as well as too shocking!

Yet what other explanation was it possible to imagine of what he had just witnessed?

Could the young man have staid longer than he intended, by any mere accident. Being Mrs. Wentworth's brother, there might be great intimacy. But then, why should Miss Wentworth, rather than his sister, remain with him for upwards of an hour; and alone—for he had left both Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth in the front room, which neither had quitted since breakfast. And the young man's manner, too, on seeing him—and his having gone through the farce of pretending to ride away. Why should there be mystery, if a simple accident had detained him. Would to heaven he could hope he were mistaken, and again he reflected: but no! all conspired to show that concealment was intended.

This, then, must be no other, than the Jean de Lyoncourt, the same to whom her letters were addressed. She could not be in secret correspondence with one man, and grant private interviews to another! She must therefore, be not only attached, but engaged to this identical young man! For

however bad a clandestine engagement might be, it was now the best construction that could be put on Miss Wentworth's extraordinary behaviour. Yet, setting aside his own disappointed feelings; how painful it was, to be thus compelled to believe Catherine—the noble, the pure hearted, the innocent Catherine, as he had always thought her, capable of conduct of which he could not approve. Suppose even this young man every way worthy of her preference, the granting thus a long private interview, to a person whose addresses were not sanctioned by her father; whose very presence in the house was concealed by a petty artifice; was a step marked with so little delicacy, with such utter absence of that high-mindedness which had been Catherine's greatest charm in his eyes, that he was shocked as well as grieved.

He tried to suspend his judgment; to hope that there might be some explanation of the affair. Yet when he went over all that had occurred, from the first letter he had

seen her receive at the Wolderlands, up to the present moment, he found it impossible to force the stubborn facts aside, and doubt. In vain did he exhaust conjecture to account for these facts, he was at length compelled to come back to the same comfortless conclusion; namely, that this young man was Miss Wentworth's correspondent; that she was attached to him; that she was engaged to him, and that she had granted him a clandestine interview, of upwards of an hour, *tête-a-tête*, and been privy to a contemptible farce enacted to deceive her father.

This summing up of the evidence was frightful: it made him shudder!

Then, had it even been with her father's consent, that she was engaged to this young man; it would have been desolating to think of the contemptible character, on which she had flung herself away. How many false and despicable sentiments had he contrived to express during his short visit of the morning. How flippant, how heartless were all his common-place com-

ments on the ways of the world; making all wisdom to consist, in believing our neighbours to be worthless.

And this was to be the husband, the cherished partner, the friend, the guide, the protector through life, of the noble-minded Catherine. Yes, she was noble-minded; in that he could not be mistaken, whatever fatal infatuation had warped her understanding on this single subject.

Then fond memories crowded upon him, of all that he had ever loved and admired in the character of Catherine; of the pure, disinterested sentiments, expressed with such engaging simplicity, without seeming to think that there was anything to be proud of. Without seeming to know that humanity could descend from the rank of being assigned to it, and become selfish and contemptible. Alas! how much she had to learn in the wretched school she was about to enter.

Was it possible to believe that she could love such a creature as de Lyon-

court? She must be deceived. A suspicion then crossed his mind, that, perhaps, when a mere child, she had been entrapped by cunning artifices into an entanglement, in which her heart had never been really concerned, and which her riper judgment now regretted; but that having given a promise of marriage, she believed herself bound to keep that promise. There was evidently something sad weighing on her mind. Was this suspicion an aggravation of Adrian's painful feelings? or was it an alleviation? He could not himself have answered the question. Can a lover grieve to think, that the woman he loves does not love another! Yet, might not Catherine be but the more wretched if she fulfilled such an engagement? Yes, if she did—but might it not end in her deciding otherwise? But then he called to mind, with a sensation of despair, how determined Catherine had seemed to be, to act definitely without consulting her father. Then came the question, was Mrs. Wentworth in the

secret—and was she a woman capable of sacrificing the only child of an indulgent and trusting husband, to the interested designs of an unprincipled brother? And should he see reason to think so, would it not be a false delicacy on his own part, to stand by without an effort to save their intended victim?

If he had not loved Catherine, he would, most assuredly, have felt it his duty to have made the effort. Was it not then because he loved her, that he feared to trust the singleness of his own motives? But was the duty, therefore, less imperative?

He must devote the remainder of his stay to observation; and endeavour to consult his conscience, without allowing either false delicacy or selfish wishes to have a voice.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

When the family party reassembled, about the hour of dinner, Mr. Wentworth, in speaking to his wife about her brother, designated him de Lyoncourt; and Mrs. Wentworth in replying, spoke of him as Jean; so that if Adrian had contrived to hide from common sense, one treasured doubt of the identity of this actor in the farce of the morning, with the correspondent of Catherine, he must now have resigned his doubt, and admitted entire conviction. He had, however, previously believed himself quite certain; yet

this confirmation caused him a feeling of additional pain.

"De Lyoncourt paid us but a short visit to-day," was the observation made by Mr. Wentworth.

"Jean had business at —— which hurried him," was the reply of Mrs. Wentworth.

Catherine had evidently heard her father's remark, for she turned her head when he spoke, and then looked at Mrs. Wentworth, and coloured, but remained silent, which showed not only a deliberate intention on her part, to keep the prolonged stay of her visiter a secret; but also betrayed an understanding between herself and Mrs. Wentworth on the subject.

During dinner she appeared to be in very low spirits; and in the evening she became evidently restless, and started, and looked almost frightened whenever the door was opened. At length she received a note, which an indirect glance at her father's face betrayed she was desirous to conceal from him.

She quitted the room immediately; whether to reply to the note or grant her lover another private interview, Adrian could not divine; but the possibility of the latter supposition being the true one, did not tend to tranquillize his nerves.

He pictured to himself Catherine entering the little back parlour, and being received by her expectant admirer. Imagine, he thought, such a fellow coming forward to meet her, smirking and grimacing, and trying to throw expression into his silly, self-sufficient countenance. He must look exactly like a monkey!

Oh how horrible the bare idea, that the image of this creature should desecrate such a shrine as the pure and noble heart of Catherine.

It was not quite charitable of Adrian to liken the young man to a monkey, for he was not particularly ugly, though he was undersized; it must, however, be admitted that he had a cringing gait and sneaking look, produced by the ever present con-

sciousness of designing and mean intentions; on which, since he had become so important a personage at Lyme Cottage, he had attempted to graft a sort of bantam cock-like strut, which certainly did render him a strange combination of the ridiculous and the disgusting.

Mr. Wentworth ascribed Adrian's abstraction to his being altogether absorbed by the plans for public improvement, in which he knew him to be actively engaged; and, accordingly, broke the silence by adverting to a very interesting conversation, which they had held that afternoon when returning together from a county meeting, convened to discuss the subject of local self-rating; with a view to founding efficient Infant, and Industrial Schools; furnished with farms, gardens, and work-shops.

The subject was, in a great measure, new to Mr. Wentworth; but it was welcome to his benevolence, his honesty, and his good sense. It had therefore struck him much, and set him thinking. After speaking of

the capabilities, and necessities of the immediate neighbourhood, he said:

"Your exposition, at the meeting this morning, of the peculiar features of your plan, was quite convincing. Children seated in rows on benches may be taught to read; but cannot learn to live! It is in the play-ground, as you justly remarked, that their sympathies must be called forth; and in the fields, gardens, and work-shops, that habits of industry must be acquired; and a sense of self-reliance and self-respect, gradually built up on the experience that strength, skill, and character, are independence. Children from such schools are not likely to resemble the juvenile delinquents of whom we read such melancholy accounts. Nor is it probable, that reading and writing, or the elements of science, or any other attainment, when acquired along with such habits, will afterwards be used for evil purposes; as many complain, is too frequently the case at present."

"That is," remarked Adrian, "only

when those instruments and elements of knowledge are taught, as the whole of education; to children whose play-ground is the street: and who never having been given any moral purpose naturally use their sharpened wits to attain whatever happens to be their object, whether that be to pick a lock, or a pocket—Or, more correctly speaking, to obtain the applause of their own little ragged world for effecting either adroitly—For—after all—in every sphere —public opinion is the great dictator! Elevate the standard of public opinion, and raise the condition of all men, sufficiently to bring them within its influence; and you will have morally educated the whole community. Indeed, the system here proposed, (pointing to a prospectus on the table), if well carried out, ought to banish both crime and poverty; for those schools ought not only to become self-supporting establishments, but they should train up a self-supporting population with morality and intelligence sufficient to become brethren,

and make mechanical science the common slave of the whole human family."

"I particularly admire the idea," rejoined Mr. Wentworth, "of the pupils acquiring the elements of each science by the simple plan, of explaining to them, while they are at work, the natural law, on which depends the success of the operation; mechanical, agricultural, or whatever it may be which they are performing at the moment. As to our own class," he added, thoughtfully, after a pause, "how little that can be made available in after life is taught to any of us in the existing systems of education. One has, in fact, almost everything to find out—that is at all useful to know—after one has quite done with schools and colleges: and to make one's discoveries too through the medium of a series of blunders, and the endurance of numberless sufferings consequent upon such.

"This I suppose is what we call purchasing our experience. But, really we

pay somewhat dearly for it—it is a sort of cent. per cent. affair! Life passes away in learning to live!"

"And after paying thus dearly," said his companion, with a sad smile, "how many leave the lives of their children and their children's children, mortgaged to misery! Where, for instance, they entail suffering upon them, by their ignorance of the common conditions of health. Or bequeath them broken fortunes and reckless habits, induced by their own want of regular and self-denying conduct. Or, worse than all, when they blight them with the withering curse of evil tempers, taught them by their own bad example. It is quite astonishing how few people seem to be aware that unkindness is sin, and want of consideration for the feelings of others, absolute dishonesty! In short, all systems of education may be reduced to this: he is best educated, who best knows how to adapt, to the production of universal hap-

piness, all the natural laws, mental as well as physical. God himself works through, and by the natural laws, as his instruments. Shall we claim to dispense with their aid?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE following morning, Catherine, at the breakfast table, excused herself from walking, on the plea that she had domestic arrangements to make, of matters which had accumulated during her absence.

An hour after, Adrian, in riding round the house, to take the road to —, where he had to attend the adjourned meeting on the education question, saw a horse being led from the back door towards the stables. It was the same on which he had seen de Lyoncourt arrive, and pretend to depart on the previous day, at the front door. He could not be mistaken, for he had remarked the animal from the drawing-room

windows, for its excessive leanness, and awkward make and gait. This had struck him the more, as he certainly inherited from his father an eye for fine horses; and though too rational to occupy himself much about his stud, always made a good selection.

Some hours after, when on his return from the meeting, he was entering the hall, a servant was taking coals into the back parlour already mentioned. Adrian avoided looking in the direction of the open door; but, while hastening past, heard a voice which always made his heart leap—so sweet, so clear, like those instruments with keys of glass, which nothing can put out of tune. It was that of Catherine, saying, in a subdued tone:

"Shut the door if you please!"

While that of De Lyoncourt, also subdued, but betraying at once, anger and insolent authority, and jarring harshly out of tune with hers, said:

"How many times have I told you never

to leave that door open when I am here."

There had been another private interview then he supposed, and from the tenor of that rebuke to the servant, they were, it would seem, of frequent occurrence. And this time, the very arrival of De Lyoncourt was a secret evidently, or why dismount at the back door, as he must have done this morning, when he had seen the horse. No mere accident could account for all this!

The idea now struck him, that this ill-assorted couple must be already privately married. Miss Wentworth could not entirely forget common propriety.

When he had dressed for dinner, and repaired to the drawing-room, he found the family party assembled; and observed that Catherine's eyes bore traces of having shed fresh tears.

In a few moments, De Lyoncourt rode up to the front door, with a great deal of needless clatter, and on the very horse

which Adrian had seen led from the back door in the morning. It was perfectly fair, therefore, to conclude that it had stood in the stable ever since, waiting to perform its part in the present pretended arrival.

De Lyoncourt marched in with his bantum cock strut. Told Mr. Wentworth, in a crowing voice, that he was come to dinner, if there was room for him: threw a glance towards the ladies, which seemed to say: "I wonder when there wouldn't be room for me!" nodded familiarly to his sister, and walking up to Catherine, stood before her in full feather; coat thrust out at the breast, buttoned in at the waist, canary-coloured new kid gloves, &c., and made an evident parade of offering her his morning salutations, as if for the first time that day; hoping, in an unnecessarily loud voice, that she had been well, since he had had the pleasure of seeing her yesterday.

She coloured. Adrian could not decide whether from emotion, or the consciousness that she was authorizing a falsehood, and

acting a part, perhaps both. All this to one who was writhing under the knowledge that the young man had been in the back room with her all the morning, was at once disgusting and irritating! he longed to take the puppy by the collar, and fling him out of the window. Again the question suggested itself: could they be privately married? If so, he thought, possibly the husband lives in the house; and when, for the purpose of blinding poor Mr. Wentworth, he seems to arrive thus at the hall door, he is merely returning from a morning ride.

He looked at De Lyoncourt, and scanned him with severity: then at Catherine, with a long and agonizing scrutiny. At length his musings condensed themselves into the single word, sacrilege! pronounced inaudibly.

The affectation of ease with which, in the course of the evening, De Lyoncourt asked Catherine to sing; his self-satisfied air, when she complied; his frequent appeals

to the looking-glass, while he stood beside the instrument; the vulgar pretension of his whole demeanour; together with the tone of his observations, still denoting the same degraded standard of right, the same scepticism of all virtue, truth, and honour, which had from the first made so unfavourable an impression on the mind of Adrian; all tended, each moment, to strengthen that impression.

Mr. Wentworth, who had been, as we have said, much interested on the previous day, by the exposition which Adrian had given of his plan to the meeting, and who had heard him with increased interest that morning, now again introduced the subject, on which De Lyoncourt stuck out one of his varnished boots, and intruded the novel remark, that, if people made poets and philosophers of the working classes, he should be glad to know who was to polish his wellingtons?

Neither of the gentlemen seemed to consider the observation worthy of a reply; so

that probably De Lyoncourt might have thought his objection unanswerable, had not his sister, just as he was smirking at himself in the glass, to see how his laurels became him, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, and said:

"If I were you, Jean, I would memorial the ministry. No government in their senses, could think of interfering with so important an interest, as the polish of *your boots!*"

"I don't recommend *you* to meddle with politics, Félicité; you only show your own ignorance," was the amiable brother's retort.

"Is it possible that she can tolerate such a being?" thought Adrian, while his heart swelled with a strange mixture of indignation and despair! for the facts were stubborn; and proved, beyond a doubt, that there did exist a secret understanding between her he had once hoped to make the cherished partner of his bosom, and this vulgar coxcomb! And though Adrian was

not proud—in the objectionable acceptation of the term—he did feel in addition to his chagrin, degraded, almost *dishonoured*, by the ideal association. He continued, however, seeing the interest which Mr. Wentworth took in the subject, to converse, and, as he proceeded, became eloquent and animated, for he was ever honestly anxious to make the merits of the educational question as well understood as possible.

While speaking thus, he met the eyes of Catherine. Her whole face was beaming, as formerly, with kindred sympathy. A glance, like those of old, was exchanged! For a second, he saw again his own Catherine! The revulsion of feeling confused his utterance! He closed the argument abruptly. While he was doing so, her eyes had already sought the ground, and the smile of intelligent acquiescence in his conclusions, had gone out like a light that is extinguished!

He looked on that dear face, and love

came flowing over his heart again, like the incoming of a full tide; for the meek and sweet expression of those fair features was that of a sufferer, upheld in the path of duty, by a noble, yet a tender purpose!

"What could it all mean?" he thought, while a sigh, he could not suppress, and would not suffer to be heard, was breathed in silent torture.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE little pleasure ground was looking all cheerfulness, for the day was clear and bright for the advanced season. Yet a deep melancholy was impressed on the countenance of Mrs. Wentworth, as she sat alone on one of the rustic chairs, with her cheek leaning on her hand. She seemed to be absorbed in thought, till roused by the sound of footsteps. She started, looked up, and seeing Adrian approaching, rose and joined him; but with the confused manner of one who had been detected doing something of which they were ashamed.

Yet she had been wholly unemployed. Had she then thoughts she would have blushed to own! and did she fear they might be read on her anxious features!

Adrian offered her his arm. He spoke of his intended departure with polite regret. Then of his esteem for Mr. Wentworth. His admiration of his character, of the rare combination it offered, of gentleness, with high-mindedness, of superior abilities, with perfect freedom from every worldly thought, and of that trustfulness, and faith in goodness, which are the surest marks of the purity of our own intentions.

A sigh escaped Mrs. Wentworth. She then spoke with the most intense fervour of the goodness and kindness of Mr. Wentworth; of the impossibility of knowing without adoring him. Of the happiness it was to love him—"or rather of the happiness it would be," she added, with dejection, "if one were worthy oneself. I cannot help thinking," she subjoined, after a pause, "that if I had known any persons like

Mr. Wentworth and yourself, and that dear, precious angel Catherine, long ago—that is, when I was a child,—I might have been very much better than I am—for after all it does seem to me quite natural to prefer such people to those who are selfish and false.

Adrian good-naturedly attempted some compliment on her own amiability; at the same time cordially agreeing with her, that when the admiration of lofty and noble sentiments is early excited, a favourable result is quite certain.

Mrs. Wentworth was too earnest, either to accept or parry any compliment to herself. She went on with her subject, therefore, and said:

"That dear girl! she has always adored her father, and admired and reverenced in him, his gentleness, his kindness, his candour, his freedom from selfishness. And her mother was, I understand, equally perfect; so that all she can remember of her, must have made a favourable impression.

I can quite fancy the child of such parents thinking it so natural and necessary to act nobly in everything, that they would never feel tempted to do otherwise. And certainly the result in the instance of Catherine is just such. It would be impossible to imagine a nature more angelic than hers—so affectionate, so disinterested. The dear creature! she would lay down her life, if it could contribute to the happiness of those she loves; especially to her father's. Oh, no one knows her worth but myself!"

Adrian's heart swelled. He hung on her words. He watched her countenance. He tried to penetrate the mystery which tortured him; but in vain. What can it all mean? he thought. He almost loved Mrs. Wentworth for her praises of Catherine. Yet how was this devotion to her father to be reconciled to a clandestine engagement to a lover not approved of by him? Mrs. Wentworth, however, seemed perfectly sincere. Could affection for her brother so far deceive her, as to make her really

think Catherine's determination to fling herself away on this young man, a proof of affectionate disinterestedness, and freedom from selfishness, deserving of all this enthusiastic commendation.

"Miss Wentworth, I am persuaded," he replied, "merits your praises. From youth and inexperience, indeed, she may be deficient in the due appreciation of prudential considerations; but yourself and Mr. Wentworth will, of course, weigh those for her, and not permit her to make undue sacrifices. Your duties as a step-mother are delicate. Your only safety is in the entire co-operation of her natural parent. If, therefore, you love Miss Wentworth as you seem to do, you will make her father—pray excuse me—the guardian of her happiness."

"Indeed, my affection for Catherine is not seeming," she interrupted. "I have many faults; but I am honest in this; I do love that dear girl!"

"From the earnestness of your manner, I am sure you do!" he replied, "and,

therefore, I trust you will pardon me for having ventured to offer advice! It is not enough that you love Miss Wentworth; you must do your duty for her, whatever sacrifice of other cherished interests that duty may demand. Never, therefore, I most solemnly adjure you, allow Miss Wentworth to take any irretrievable step, without the knowledge of her father! I am not at liberty to explain myself further at present; but, as you are in Miss Wentworth's confidence, you, of course, understand me—"

Ere Mrs. Wentworth, who was gazing up eagerly in his face, could reply, Madame de Lyoncourt joined them. She looked from one to the other, with her quick, suspicious eye; then said:

"My daughter, I suppose, has been giving way to her foolish, nervous fears, as usual."

Mrs. Wentworth retired to the house, and Madame de Lyoncourt continued:

"I try to rouse Félicité, but really I am

becoming uneasy myself. I cannot help fancying that her apprehensions may proceed from some sort of presentiment; or, who knows, cause the very mischief she dreads. I have always understood that it was very dangerous in her situation to give way to fears about oneself."

CHAPTER XL.

Mr. Wentworth's opportune appearance happily changed the ill chosen topic; or Adrian, not being versed in these feminine superstitions, might have found himself at a loss for a reply.

Madame de Lyoncourt almost immediately following her daughter, the two gentlemen were left together.

It was Adrian's last day at Lyme cottage. Mr. Wentworth had expected, ere this, to have received a declaration of his attachment to his daughter. Of the existence of such an attachment, he had

scarcely a doubt; for, though Adrian intended to behave with great distance towards Catherine; and though she thought him cold and formal, compared with former times; yet there was, in the expression of the countenance, in the tone of the voice, in the whole manner, a something which betrayed him to all lookers on, who cared to observe.

Mr. Wentworth, under these impressions, thought that his slowness to come forward must be occasioned by the idea that the marriage might no longer be considered a sufficiently brilliant one for Catherine; he had, therefore, in *tête-à-tête* conversations of the previous evening, and that morning, given his young friend to understand, as plainly as delicacy would permit, that he did not place ambitious considerations in competition with amiability, worth, and that elevated tone of mind, in all things, with which alone, either himself or his child could sympathise.

On the present occasion, after a painfully long silence, he opened the interview by saying:

"So, you are about to leave us Adrian!"

The departing guest felt that those few words, simple as they are, implied surprise, almost reproach.

It may be imagined what were his feelings. Precluded by his promise to Catherine from confessing that he had been rejected; he was obliged to hear all—see all—understand all—with the manner of one who would not hear, nor see—nor understand anything.

Mr. Wentworth was mortified; and began to think it just possible, that the young man might, himself, wish to make a more ambitious match—Now that his daughter's being a great heiress had become doubtful. But he was grieved, as well as mortified; for Catherine, in her early letters from the Wolderlands, had innocently betrayed her own feelings, before she had been herself aware of them. Her later epistles, certainly, had become more reserved; but this

had only strengthened her father's belief in her attachment. On her return home, therefore, he had watched her closely, and been confirmed in his opinion. So that any uneasiness he felt—and he was sometimes annoyed—when de Lyoncourt approached his daughter, arose entirely from disgust at the presumption of the young man's manner; struggling with his own good-natured fear, of hurting the feelings of his wife by taking notice of the matter.

The interview was altogether very painful to Adrian. The partial praises of the fond father; the confidence he expressed in the filial tenderness, the devotion of his child, seemed to aggravate by contrast the system of concealment she was carrying on into a species of treachery; her preference of a worthless puppy of a lover to the happiness of such a parent, into a proof at once of selfishness and bad taste, which was utterly revolting.

As often, however, as he came to this conclusion his heart resisted the decision of

his judgment, and he tried to disbelieve the whole affair. Yet, there stood the facts, no other way to be accounted for; but by the supposition of a clandestine engagement to de Lyoncourt. Indeed, it was necessarily impossible for any one, unacquainted with every particular of the family history, to divine the extraordinary circumstances in which the poor inexperienced Catherine was placed by the helplessness, in a worldly point of view, of her father's character; the strong affection for him, unguided by judgment, of her step-mother; and the low, designing cunning of a young man like de Lyoncourt; who, without principle for his support, had been subjected to a temptation much too strong for him; when, many years since, unlimited confidence had been placed in him by a whole family, not one of whom was capable of being the slightest check upon his dishonest views of self-aggrandizement.

Adrian did not even know, that de Lyoncourt was Mr. Wentworth's man of business.

Neither did he know, that Mr. Wentworth owed a shilling in the world; so that he was every way unprepared to solve the mysteries which surrounded him.

He had observed in Mr. Wentworth, the restless uneasiness already alluded to, when De Lyoncourt approached, or addressed Catherine; whence he derived a hope, that the father, once alarmed, would perceive what was going on, and interfere in time to save his child. This tended to lighten the painful responsibility he felt, in being the unwilling depository of such a secret. Miss Wentworth had said she could not marry till of age—this still gave him time to weigh his duty, while he watched events.

The occurrences of the last two days, had produced a marked difference in his manner towards Catherine, which she felt, without being able to comprehend. The vague suspicion which had crossed her mind in the carriage, on the day he had accompanied her to Lyme Cottage, began to assume an air of probability.

"He really must be of the same opinion as grandpapa, after all," she thought. "He must have made up his mind, that the changed prospects of both of us make it no longer a desirable match; and, therefore, he is anxious, I suppose, to let me see, without the awkwardness of an explanation, that he has no intention of renewing addresses, made under circumstances so different. It is better it should be so—I cannot marry him: why should he not love one who can, and be happy."

CHAPTER XLI

"I SAY once more, will you find the money?" demanded Madame De Lyoncourt of her son, who sat with her, *tète-a-tète*, in the dressing-room, adjoining her daughter's bedroom.

"I don't see what I'm to gain by it," he replied, "on the contrary—"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the lady, "you're such a brilliant match yourself, to be sure! and so perfectly certain of being well received by the father and the grandfather, that fifty thousand pounds certain, is not a sufficiently large fortune for you, forsooth!"

"Not when there's more to be had," he

replied. "However, she is a nice girl; and it don't do for thieves to fall out."

"Will you find the money then? for he won't budge without it!"

"That's your look out—I don't want him to budge—I'd just as soon he didn't, for that matter."

"Then you mean to act honourably, and above board," she rejoined, in an ironical tone. "You mean to recommend yourself to the family, on the score of your high connections—you mean to tell all, and pray don't leave out that your father is an escaped *forçat*, and leader of the most desperate gang of the Paris thieves and assassins at this moment. This will doubtless decide the old Lord in your favour."

"I didn't choose my father," he answered, doggedly; "that was your doing. What did you marry such a villain for?"

"You may well say villain," she rejoined. "He is a villain, that will lay violent hands on me yet, one of these days or nights, perhaps. But this is losing time:

I tell you, Jean, you must find this money, or it will be worse for us all. He knows too much already!"

"There's something in that," replied Jean. "Well, we'll see what can be done. 'Twas a pity he was ever let into the secret."

And throwing up the casement, he stepped out on the lawn, the room being on the ground floor.

"Convenient this," he observed, turning round, and scanning the window with his eye for a moment, ere he took his way towards the stables, to mount his lean charger, and depart as he had come, by the back approach. Not that he was very particular about being seen, for he was of opinion, that suspicious appearances noticed by servants, might one day tell in his favour; while even if Mr. Wentworth began, as he termed it, when talking to himself, "to see a little out of the corner of one of his eyes, the

women," meaning his mother and sister, "could easily make up some story to bamboozle him with." Then, as to Mr. Adrian Wentworth's getting a glimpse of what's going on, that might be a dangerous game, if he saw too much; but just an inkling of Miss Catherine's being fond of me, wouldn't be amiss: it would be such a triumph," he added, rubbing his hands with glee, to make a man like that jealous of one, and have his teeth watering to be in one's shoes. It's worth while being a little fool-hardy for! His pride too will make him gulp down his disappointment, and keep his own counsel! He won't like to say he was cut out by an attorney's clerk neither. Nothing I should like better than see him in the church when we're getting married!"

The intended union of the cousins, as planned by Lord Wolderland, and its suspension, in consequence of the expected birth of a possible heir to the estates, were subjects frequently discussed in the offices

of the Messrs. Higgins, to whom all particulars had been duly communicated by Mr. Snooks: so that Jean's vulgar anticipation of triumph, having all that adventitious circumstances could add to heighten its relish, was complete.

"And my mother thinks she's got hold of a spoony, does she? giving up my own interest to oblige her—a likely story! It won't do to make a noise just now—but—" and he winked, grinned, and snapped his fingers, then added, "nicely, I'll throw them all overboard yet! and only justice to Miss Catherine too.

"Winning ways, she has, to be sure! and fond of me she is—or I'm very much out in my reckoning. If I were a man of fortune, and could afford it, I wouldn't mind marrying that girl to-morrow without a shilling! And I'm not going to be an unkind husband to her—far from it—I'll be as loving as she likes! and nothing loth—beauty is very enticing! And I'll have time for it then, too; my fortune being made. And it's the least she can

have for her money is all the attention I can pay her." And here he indulged for a time in a tender reverie, as his lean pony jogged along between the hedge-rows of a romantic, country lane.

"Lips like cherries!" he ejaculated. "Fine bust—as they say in newspapers about the actresses—slender waist—and those pretty little feet and hands. Why, there would be no difficulty in being for everlasting billing and cooing, just like two turtle doves!"

After a long silence, during which his countenance wore a self-satisfied smirk, the current of his thoughts seemed to change, for he suddenly exclaimed,

"As for the creditors, they may go whistle any tune they like—they shan't have a shilling! I'll soon show them, that the signature of a minor, is not worth a button! And as for my mother's plans —I'll crack that nut, I can tell her—and pick the kernel out, too, whenever it suits me to do so! If ever Félicité should

be a widow, she may go out for a governess again, that's all! But my wife shall have her rights!

Justice, is justice!!!

Whether the pony was startled at hearing such an assertion from an attorney's clerk; or whether a round stone got under its fore foot, as it was proceeding slowly, and with a loose rein on its neck, down a steep hill, is uncertain; but, at the moment it stumbled, sent the dreaming lover, tender reveries, rascally machinations and all over its head, sprawling in the mud; and spoiled its own beauty for ever, by breaking its knees, to say nothing of utterly destroying the bright blue coat, smart gilt buttons, and new kid gloves of its master.

CHAPTER XLII.

At the moment of Adrian's departure from Lyme Cottage, he laid the following letter in Catherine's work-basket.

"My dear Miss Wentworth,

"Circumstances, quite unsought for by me, have put me in possession of further particulars on the subject of the partial confidence with which you were once compelled, as you yourself termed it, to honor me.

"These circumstances have greatly increased my fears for your happiness. Anxiety for that happiness is, believe me,

my sole motive for interference. I know my own heart, I am disinterested. I never should have addressed you again with these importunities, if I had seen any prospect of your being happy; but I have watched you, I have observed you closely; and I am convinced that you would be miserable.

"I could have borne my own disappointment, perhaps, but you will not be able to bear yours, Catherine! and this is what I cannot bear to see.

"I feel that I am responsible for your happiness. Your youth, your inexperience, my being aware of your imprudent engagements; of your fatal resolve to act in this matter, without consulting your natural guardian, whose advice might save you, make this interference on my part an imperative duty.

"Let me entreat you to have no secrets from your father. This is all I request, I I do not demand any consideration for *my* feelings. I do not plead them. I only ask you to pity yourself. Have I not

marked sorrow on that face, tears in those eyes, which have betrayed to me the nature of your feelings.

"Dear Catherine, I pity you with my whole soul. You think you are bound in honour, but such a sacrifice cannot be necessary—it is too great. Consult with your father, and he will set you free without; the dishonour rests with those who would take advantage of inexperience. Believe me, if I were your own twin brother, I could not more ardently, or with more disinterested feelings, desire your happiness.

"Ever yours faithfully,

"ADRIAN WENTWORTH."

The flutter of undefined hope, with which Catherine broke the seal of this letter, was quickly dissipated by the perusal of its first few lines.

The total absence of the language of love; the careful substitution of that of friendship, was what first struck her.

Then she began to wonder, what could

be the additional information to which he alluded; and when, and from whom, he received such?

The Messrs. Higgins, she thought, must have consulted with Mr. Snooks respecting the security; and Snooks must have explained to Adrian all about her intending to pay her father's debts, and his objections to her doing so; and her engagements not to marry till they were paid! He must now, then, understand, she thought; why she had refused to enter into her grandpapa's arrangements: and, consequently, if he did not regard the loss of her fortune, he must see, that the obstacles to their union, which she had spoken of, were but temporary—Yet, he expressed no desire to remove those obstacles by substituting his security; nor even a wish, that after she should come of age, and the debts be paid, she would accept him.

All chance then, that an explanation would be sought by him; and would lead to a noble and disinterested renewal of his

addresses was now at an end! This very last floating straw, by which she had been secretly clinging ever since his passionate declaration of love, had now disappeared from the surface of the dark waters, and she had nothing left but to let them pass over her, and sink into utter hopelessness.

"Is it possible then," she thought, "that this change in his feelings, his manners, his language, has been wrought by the idea, that should Mrs. Wentworth give birth to a son, I shall have little or no fortune after those debts are paid!"

She read on, and coloured excessively as she came to expressions such as: "I am convinced you would be miserable!" "I could have borne my disappointment, perhaps—but you will not be able to bear yours, Catherine!" for they seemed to throw quite a new light on the purpose of the letter.

"Could it be a renewal of his addresses, in this extraordinary form?

Could he possibly mean to say, that he sees he has so thoroughly gained my affections, that I cannot resign him without being miserable; and that, therefore, he feels responsible for my happiness, and is, consequently, willing to make some sacrifice to render our union possible; but that 'so great a sacrifice cannot be necessary'—Yes, he says so distinctly."

And she read the passages again.

"Am I then to understand, that rather than break my heart—for he 'asks no consideration for his own feelings—he does not plead them,' he says; but that rather than break my heart—out of pity for me, he will brave the unentailed estates being in danger, and be satisfied with the fifty-thousand pounds; but that he positively cannot afford to marry, if I pay away this money! The delicacy of the subject, I suppose, prevents his expressing his conditions in precisely these distinct terms; but this must be what he means by urging me so earnestly to consult my father,

and get him to set me free from my promise, not to marry till the debts were paid, so that I might consent to marry him now—yes, he must mean this; or why should he wish me to be set free? And this is what he calls being disinterested! I suppose he thinks the creditors might be made to wait. But no, I shall never purchase his love—much as I once prized it—by leaving my dear father, subject, at any moment, to be taken to a gaol, whenever the Messrs. Higgins choose to withdraw their sufferance! And they would do so, and be perfectly justified in doing so, the moment I forfeited my word to them, by placing the power of disposing of my property in any hands but my own, prior to giving them payment, or legal security. This much, at least, of business, I ought to understand—for Jean has explained it often enough."

She now felt wretched indeed; for she now thought less well of Adrian; and was also indignant at the coolness and condi-

tional character of his love, so unlike his first generous declaration.

She felt degraded, too, by his compassion.

"Yet, after thus insulting me with his pity," she thought, "he holds out to have the money—for entreating me to consult my father, is only a more delicate way of saying, he will not or cannot marry without it! The lawyers, of course, have informed him, that papa would never consent to my paying the debts! Indeed, I told him as much myself; and that I was, therefore, compelled to keep the business a secret from him. I think myself bound, he says; but my father would set me free without dishonour—yes! by going to gaol himself!"

She wept long. Then condemned herself most unjustly; mistaking her desolate and wounded feelings, for hesitation in the path of duty—for contemptible weakness—for unwillingness to resign Adrian for ever; even as the only alternative of

of his own demeaning and worthless conditions!

Oh, how sovereign was her contempt for herself during this bitter moment.

"I must be utterly selfish," she thought, "I can have no real affection for my poor father! I could give the money cheerfully enough; because I set no value on money —but now that I am called upon, for the first time, to make a real sacrifice, to a great duty, I sink under the trial! I am mean enough to regret one, who rejects me, unless I will disregard my father's safety for his love! One who calls a sum of money too great a sacrifice; and, in the same breath, demands the immolation of natural affection, and of common honesty. Ought I not to consider myself insulted by such a proposition? Ought I not to despise him who could give me such advice?"

After weeping, as we weep for one dead, over the memory of Adrian, such as she had formerly thought him, she pronounced aloud—

"Such a letter is unworthy of reply!"

Then changed her mind, and wrote as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Wentworth,

"I thank you for your brotherly anxiety, respecting my interests. I have, however, but one course to pursue, to fulfil my engagements honourably!

"Yours truly,

"CATHERINE WENTWORTH."

"And if," she thought, as she folded her note, "the hope that I am doing right will not sustain me—why—my heart must break, that's all!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

MRS. WENTWORRH continued low-spirited. Catherine even thought that Madame de Lyoncourt, constantly scolding her about it, to rouse her, as she alleged, made her worse, for she frequently found them together, engaged in discussions, and Mrs. Wentworth generally in tears. Indeed, so intent was Madame de Lyoncourt on her system of rousing, that she scarcely let her daughter out of her sight; so much so that Catherine, who had many little matters to consult Mrs. Wentworth about, could not find an opportunity of doing so.

A few evenings subsequent to Adrian's

departure, Mrs. Wentworth complained of not feeling quite well, and went early to her room, accompanied by her mother. Shortly after, violent ringing was heard. Then the voice of Madame de Lyoncourt in the hall, desiring that the doctor and the nurse might be sent for immediately.

"Did not that sound like opening Félicité's window?" asked Mr. Wentworth, listening, "can she have fainted?" and he hastened to enquire; but received Madame de Lyoncourt's assurances, at the threshold of his wife's door, that all was going on well.

One messenger after another was dispatched, but neither nurse nor doctor were to be found immediately, as they did not expect their summons till the week following. Before the arrival of either, however, the birth of a son was announced. When, therefore, those grave authorities appeared, they had only to pronounce the long wished for heir of the Wolderlands, a remarkably large, fine child, and very like Mr. Went-

worth. This was first pointed out by Madame de Lyoncourt, but immediately perceived by every one, at least, so they said.

Mrs. Wentworth was declared to be as well as could be expected.

Mr. Wentworth's first thought was, of course, the safety of his dear wife, about whom the fears of her mother had made him anxious. When at leisure, however, to look at the baby, and take it in his arms, he allowed it to be a fine child ; but could not find out the striking likeness which Madame de Lyoncourt talked of. He smiled, notwithstanding, good-naturedly, and yielded to the unanswerable arguments of that lady, who said, that as to the nose being flat at present, that would rise. And that as to the face being short, that would lengthen! "Who had ever heard," she asked, triumphantly, "of a new-born infant having a high nose, and a long face?"

Then she was every moment discovering

new points of similitude. The finger nails were so like—and the smile—and as for the ear it was precisely Mr. Wentworth's, in miniature. After a few days, papa had heard so much about the alleged likeness, that he too began to ask strangers, if they could perceive the great resemblance of the infant to himself. They did so of course, except that some thought the child more like its mama; others more like Catherine; and a few, who had the honour of knowing Lord Wolderland, very like its grandfather.

With this last feature of the case, particularly insisted upon the important news was dispatched to the Wolderlands.

His lordship is said to have started to his feet, and changed colour, from the intensity of his emotion.

He demanded the safe custody of his grandson, that, under his auspices, the child might be brought up in a manner becoming his future representative.

Madame de Lyoncourt recommended

doing everything possible to humour Lord Wolderland. Mr. Wentworth was at first very unwilling to part with the child; but, at length, said, that, if it were not demanding too great a sacrifice of Félicité, possibly it might be wise to make this concession to his father.

"Perhaps you will not mind it so much, my love," he added, "As your mother does not think you strong enough to nurse the child yourself, you may not miss it, as you would otherwise have done."

Here Madame de Lyoncourt interposed, saying, somewhat tartly, that her daughter was such a devoted wife, that she had neither eyes nor thoughts for anything but Mr. Wentworth, while he was present; but that if he could see her fondling the baby when he was not in the room, he would not accuse her of not loving her child.

Mrs. Wentworth only exclaimed,

"Mother! Mother!"

While tears fell on the hand of her husband, as she kissed it passionately; his

fond reprimands had not yet cured her of this deferential mode of showing her affection.

It was, however, at last fixed that the child should go to the Wolderlands.

At the time appointed, his lordship, with his usual pomposity, sent his own travelling carriage and four, with two confidential servants to assist the nurse in the safe conveyance of the heir apparent; the preparations for whose reception were something like what might have been expected for that of a Prince of the blood.

His lordship entertained a dinner party to drink its health, on the day of its arrival. During the dessert it was handed round the table and shown to the guests, who did not fail to perceive the striking likeness to Lord Wolderland.

Nearly a whole wing of the Wolderlands was devoted to day and night nurseries. The cot and bassinet were covered with point lace. The utensils for warming the food, were all in pure gold; and the clothes

themselves were curiosities of extravagance. Although the young stranger was thus cordially welcomed, yet, in consequence of the aggravated offence of the Chancery suit, Lord Wolderland still refused to be reconciled to his son, or to pay his debts, or to make him any allowance.

The financial department, therefore, at Lyme Cottage was by no means in a flourishing condition, while the creditors were more clamorous than ever, in consequence Jean said of "Miss Catherine's security not being so good.

CHAPTER XLIV.

On the evening of the day on which the infant had been sent to the Wolderlands, Catherine was seated by the fire in her own room, looking wistfully at the flames, and quite forgetting that it was time to undress and go to bed. She started on perceiving Mrs. Wentworth close at her side.

"My mother seems quite knocked up, at last; she is not only in bed, but asleep already," said the apparition, as she took a seat by Catherine, and asked her kindly what made her so thoughtful; then fell into a reverie herself.

"I have often thought," she said, after

a short silence, "that it would have been very like the proud old lord, that is, had things remained as they were, I mean; to have planned a marriage between you and Mr. Adrian Wentworth, for the purpose of keeping together the family estates. But I never can get you to talk on the subject."

Catherine remained silent.

"Was there anything of the kind, love, thought of? Do tell me—I have a reason for asking."

Catherine, who by this time was very busy putting on her night-cap, answered, in some confusion:

"Oh, I don't know; at any rate, he cannot wish it now."

"But is there no one else who wishes it still?"

"If you mean Mr. Adrian Wentworth; he has too much good sense, as grand-papa says, to wish anything that would not be perfectly prudent. And, as for me, I have but one wish in the world; that is, to be of age! Once I have paid dear papa's

debts I shall be too happy to care about anything else! Only think of those men staying all night in the house; and our having two day's work to get rid of them: I thought they would never have gone away! They talked quite sulkily about my security not being so good now; and persisted a long time, that papa must go with them. I stood against the door for two hours to prevent their passing while Jean persuaded them. I wanted to send for you; but Jean said they would not listen to any one but me. Oh! it is terrible to have my poor father threatened in this manner every moment of his life! It is wretchedness! It poisons my whole existence! Nothing can give me pleasure while this sword hangs by a hair over his head! And Jean says the Messrs. Higgins too are much more difficult to manage than formerly, not only because the security is less good; but also, that they are becoming suspicious, and anxious lest I should break faith with them and the creditors, and

marry under age. Mr. Snooks, it seems, has been alarming them with all sorts of foolish reports from the Wolderlands. Jean was obliged to give those men, the other day, his own security before they would go away."

"*His* security, indeed!" murmured Mrs. Wentworth, with a scornful curl of the lip.

"Well, he said," rejoined Catherine, "that he might not be a very rich man, to be sure; but, at least, he risks his own liberty to keep papa out of gaol. So one ought to be grateful, you know."

"Oh, Jean will take care of himself," said Mrs. Wentworth; "never fear!"

"You can have no idea," continued Catherine, "how miserable his letters, about the threats of those people, made me while I was at the Wolderlands: every post I expected to hear that dear papa was in gaol. I could hardly break the seal sometimes, my fingers trembled so!"

"It was very cruel of Jean to make you so uncomfortable."

"Oh, no! it could not be avoided, you know. The Messrs. Higgins wanted, he said, to see letters in my own hand, dated from the Wolderlands, and with the post-mark to show that they were written of my own accord, and not under any influence; renewing my promise not to marry till I had paid all the debts, or given legal security. I was obliged to send a great many letters; for Jean wrote again, every post, to say, that there was something more to put in to make them quite satisfactory, or that the creditors would send poor, dear papa to gaol! I would have written not only every post, but every hour; and said anything in the world Jean chose to dictate to prevent that! What could I do? for grand-papa, you know, as I wrote you word, though I knelt to him, and wept at his feet, would do nothing; nor even let me come back—Oh, how helpless I felt that day! And to

think of his threatening to take away the five-hundred a-year from poor papa; and even to put him in gaol for the arrears. Well might Jean say he was our only friend!"

"Jean is too fond of boasting!" observed Mrs. Wentworth.

"Unhappily," said Catherine, "the boast is but too true! What other friend will run any risk, or take any trouble about us? In my despair, the other day at the Wolderlands, after grandpapa's threats frightened me, I was obliged to speak a good deal about things to Mr. Adrian Wentworth. I did not certainly explain all, or ask him to assist my father—I could not do that—though I was so thrown off my guard, that I told him, in a confused manner, about grandpapa threatening to send papa to gaol, so that he must have perceived that there were debts and difficulties, yet he did not seem to understand—at least he did not offer his security, only advised me to do nothing without my father's know-

ledge—so that I was afraid to explain matters further. For papa, you know, were he to tell him, would declare that my money should not be taken, and then they would throw him into prison."

"Yes! yes! I know Mr. Adrian is all for your papa being told everything. Do you think then, he knows exactly how matters stand, about your intending to pay the debts when you come of age?"

"Yes, I think he must have found out a good deal from the lawyers in some way; for he said the step I was about to take, was too great a sacrifice, and advised me to consult my father first—what other step could he mean?"

"Oh! if he used that expression, it is quite clear that he must know everything!" rejoined Mrs. Wentworth.

She reflected for a few moments, then went on:

"I know that the Messrs Higgins were obliged to have recourse to Snooks, respecting various deeds, before they could be

satisfied as to the security you would be able to give, when of age. It is therefore probable, that Snooks is in all their secrets. It is their own interest, however, to keep the thing quiet; so there is no danger of their betraying us to Lord Wolderland, but Mr. Snooks may have mentioned the busi-nsss to Mr. Adrian Wentworth in confi-dence, at the time that a marriage with you was in agitation. Indeed, for that matter, Snooks may have made a merit of putting him secretly on his guard, about your for-tune being in danger: for Snooks, of course, would not mind throwing the Messrs Higgins overboard, if he could get into greater favour by it himself. It was, probably, before he knew he was to be dis-missed.

"You and I never could get a quiet moment, you know, to talk matters over, before my confinement. My mother had always so much to say herself, I mean, just at that time. Indeed, she kept me in such a constant state of agitation, rousing me to

keep up my spirits, as she thought, poor woman, that I could not so much as think."

"I am quite sure," interrupted Catherine, who had been reflecting, "that your supposition about Snooks is correct: it explains Mr. Wentworth's knowledge of many things, I did not venture to mention. Snooks having put him on his guard, however, is quite unimportant to me, as I should not have accepted him at any rate; and never mean to marry any one."

"Why should you say that, my dear child? I should be miserable, indeed, if I thought your happiness was to be sacrificed!"

"Oh, sensible men, it seems, do not marry without fortune! and you would not have me marry a simpleton," she added, with an unsuccessful attempt at playfulness; "and when the debts are paid, I shall probably have no fortune left; and therefore, of course, I shall remain un-

married. But it does not follow that I am to be unhappy!"

"As to fortune," interposed Mrs. Wentworth, "your father, you know love, will repay all that."

"Dear papa! yes! he will always do everything that is right and kind! But I don't want it—indeed, I don't—and, besides, any one I might have no objection to marry, will, most probably, be married, long before papa will have it in his power to repay me. But do not let that distress you," she added, eagerly, throwing her arms round the neck of Mrs. Wentworth, who, she perceived, was in tears. "Indeed, I had much rather never marry—I should like to stay always with dear papa—and I am quite sure, that if he were once in safety, I should be so happy, that I could never again regret anything, or let anything afflict me!"

"You are an angel, Catherine," said Mrs. Wentworth, caressing her fondly.

"I wonder, too," she recommenced,

trying to rally a little, "why the Messrs Higgins should be so anxious about letters of yours, considering that, as you are not of age, they are of no value in law?"

"Jean says, the Messrs Higgins are of opinion, that with such letters to show, or threaten to show, in court, in case of necessity, they could prove me so bound, in honour at least, that I could not, without utter disgrace, plead non-age for not paying the debts; or, what they fear much more, breaking the distinct condition on which they grant my father time, by marrying before they are paid, or legal security given. But they little know me! For if I loved any one ever so much, I would sooner die than marry them, before I had placed the safety of my dear father out of the reach of every possible contingency!"

"Yes, love," rejoined her step-mother; "but remember, you have the whole of life before you, and a blight on its spring time is seldom got over!"

She gazed fondly for a moment or two, in the face of the lovely girl, drew her towards her, kissed her forehead, and murmured:

"Sweet rose-bud—I must not see that darling head droop! Once they do so, they never blow! Have you remarked that? Oh, no, you must not be sacrificed!"

"I have it now in my own power," replied Catherine, firmly, yet in a clear, sweet, gentle tone, that implied sensibility to the kindness, "to stand between my father and a period of imprisonment, which might cost him his life! Ought I then, to stake his safety on any confidence, however great, which I might feel in the honour or generosity of any being on earth!"

Mrs. Wentworth sighed.

"I might have been foolish enough to have thought differently once," resumed Catherine; "but I have been learning knowledge of the world of late; and I find that there are people who are con-

sidered very amiable, yet who call, what I should esteem selfishness, only being sensible!"

"I think though," murmured Mrs. Wentworth, in a confidential under tone, "that he is thoroughly amiable, and noble; and that his promising the creditors, to see them safe, would set all right! and make us all happy! eh, darling?"

Catherine coloured deeply. Then turning away, said, in a hasty manner—

"Heaven knows what any one might do!"

She became silent, and seemed lost in deep meditation.

Busy memories, of how perfect she had once believed the being alluded to, to be, crowded into her thoughts, and her features, for a few moments, became radiant with a light from within! But, gradually, glow and lustre faded, she became pale as the water lily, moved her head slowly from side to side, and murmured—

"No! no! it must not be! If he had

nobly offered to redeem my promises, by his legal security, the arrangement might have been made, both with honour, and with safety; but merely an understanding, that he would respect my promises, would not do—a time might come, that he would view things in a different light—and if I could violate a *first* duty, by committing my father's safety to other hands, why should I expect another, to hold a secondary duty more sacred! Besides, you know, as I mentioned, he has already pronounced the sacrifice too great; and recommended that my father should interfere to set me free!"

"You are a dear, generous, noble-minded girl, Catherine," exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth; "you always know what is right better than I do; though I am so much your senior. But oh! what a thousand pities it is!" she added; and here she fell again into a protracted reverie, of which she broke the silence by saying: "My mother used to be quite sure, that if the child should be a boy, Lord Wolder-

land would be reconciled to your father, pay the debts, give a suitable allowance, and make us all comfortable at once—for as to waiting for his death, he may live these twenty years, and send us all to our graves of broken hearts! And now, you see, he will not do anything for us."

"Grandpapa is very unkind, indeed," said Catherine.

"A silence again ensued, which Mrs. Wentworth broke, by saying,

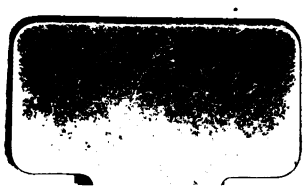
"I am sure, dear Catherine, when I used to wish to have a son, I never dreamt of its injuring you, my sweet girl; I thought, on the contrary, that your grandfather being reconciled to us, and paying the debts, as I supposed he would do, would emancipate your fortune. And then Mr. Adrian Wentworth too, before any of us knew him at all, it was quite a different thing: people always think it a pity to see a property going away to a distant cousin; but from the time I became acquainted with him, and suspected, that he loved you; and saw

how worthy he was to inherit the titles and estates; I never wished the child to be a boy! It was my mother who wished it still."

"Well, but, at any rate, we must not murmur at the decrees of Providence!" interposed Catherine. "What right have I to be an only child, and monopolize everything? What wrong is done to a cousin by papa having a son of his own to represent him?"

"No doubt, Providence will set all right," said Mrs. Wentworth, rising to depart; for it was now very late. "God bless you, love! Every good thought comes from God—Do you not think so, Catherine? and ought to be minded as much as the Commandments themselves! Is not the good impulse a direct commandment spoken within the heart? When we resist such do we not wrestle with God? I used not to think of those kind of things till lately, Catherine!" As she kissed her affectionately and bade her good night, she

added: "It must be good to love people! —Good for one's self, I mean; for I can seldom feel sure of the right, or the wrong of a thing, till I find that it makes some one I love happy, or unhappy; and then my eyes open at once!"

"Adrian would tell you," replied Catherine, a faint gleam of the inspiration these subjects always awakened appearing on her countenance; "that as much happiness as we can give them, is the due of every fellow creature; whether we love them or not —or rather, that we should love all. Every sentiment he expresses is certainly noble!" she added, with a suppressed sigh, as Mrs. Wentworth passed out. "Can it be, that I misjudge him? Can I have misunderstood him?" she thought, as fixed like a statue she remained standing in the centre of the room where Mrs. Wentworth had left her.

END OF VOL. II.